RACING AROUND THE WORLD

An
ANDY LANE
Story

EUSTACE L. ADAMS

THE ANDY LANE SERIES

FIFTEEN DAYS IN THE AIR

By EUSTACE L. ADAMS

Author of
Over the Polar Ice,
Racing Around the World, Etc.

Fellows, this is Andy Lane, hero of this new flying series. Andy is a typical American boy, just like any of the rest of us—daring, full of life and with a lively, irrepressible sense of humor.

Filled with a desire to follow in the footsteps of American air heroes in blazing new trails through the skies, Andy learns to fly and soon his skill attracts nation-wide attention. With the backing of the Apex Aircraft Company Andy takes off with his companions, Joe Lamson and Sam Allen (not forgetting Scottie, the pup) in a giant tri-motored ship to demonstrate the refueling of a plane in the air. For fifteen days the great craft remains aloft, fighting southern tornadoes and modern fogs, with another plane coming up periodically to drop fuel in her tanks through a long hose. Herbert Brewster, Andy's enemy, does everything in his power to bring disaster to our hero and his crew, but Andy fights through it all and comes to earth with a new world's record.

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A wealthy sportsman has offered a prize of $100,000 for a go-as-you-please race around the world, starting from some point within 20 miles of New York City. There are twelve entries, including many famous fliers from foreign countries. Andy Lane, along with Joe, Sam, Dick and Scotty, the collie pup, enter their South Pole flying boat. Brewster, the villain of former stories, is also one of the contestants.

Through the trickery of Brewster, the Apex is delayed a day in starting. One of the motors has been tampered with and the great ship barely makes the Mississippi, where a new engine is installed. But Andy makes up the time and races across the Pacific on the heels of his rivals. He receives an SOS from a burning yacht near the Philippines, and in going to their rescue apparently loses all chance of winning. Then follows the exciting dash through a monsoon across Africa, the final hop over the Atlantic and the thrilling finish with the fast Brewster plane streaking behind them toward New York and glory.

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RACING AROUND THE WORLD

CHAPTER I

THE GREAT RACE IS ANNOUNCED

CRASH! Bang! Thump! There was a shrill yelp from a small dog and the sound of a terrific bump. Then Andy Lane, followed by his collie pup, Scotty, tumbled down the last five steps into the breakfast room.

"Well, I do declare!" exclaimed his mother. "If you two cannot manage to walk down one small flight of stairs without falling, how on earth do you stay up in the air when you fly?"

"Gee, Mother," replied the most famous young flier in the world, gently fingering a bump as big as a hen's egg on his head, "Scotty got right between my legs! If he does it again, I'll keep him on the ground for a whole week!"

The tan and white puppy scrambled to his feet and rushed over to his master, to show him

there were no hard feelings. Andy pushed the cold, wet nose away and laughed.

"Is breakfast ready?" he asked. "I'm so nungry I could eat a stewed propeller!"

As Andy attacked a large grapefruit, with a bright red cherry in its center, Mr. Lane looked up from the morning newspaper.

"There is some mighty interesting news today, Son," he said, smiling. "But I'm afraid after you've heard it, you'll lose your appetite."

"What is it, Dad?" demanded the boy anxiously. "Has some pilot I know been killed?"

"Not yet! There's been a prize of one hundred thousand dollars offered for a round the world race."

"Whoops!" yelled Andy in great excitement. "If that doesn't fit in with my plans, nothing ever will."

Mrs. Lane looked up in sudden alarm.

"You don't mean to say that you are thinking of making another of those terrible flights, do you?" she asked.

"Why, sure, Mother. Why not? I've been planning a flight around the world ever since we

started on the fifteen day endurance hop. I had hoped to make it this summer and a race makes the whole thing so much more exciting!"

"Land's sakes!" worried Mrs. Lane. "Why can't you keep your two feet on the ground, like other boys your age? First you spend two weeks up in the air without coming down once. Then, of all places, you had to go and fly to the South Pole, where it's so cold that even thinking about it makes me sneeze and shiver all over! It's become so you can't walk half a mile. Before long you'll be flying down to the corner drug store to get a tube of toothpaste!"

To Andy's mother it made little difference that her son was a hero known in every country in the world. To her, he was just her beloved nineteen year old boy who simply would persist in taking chances when there seemed to be no need of it. She just had to grumble about it!

"Seems to me that these two flights, with all the regular, everyday flying you do, should have been enough even for you. This idea of your wanting to be gallivanting around the world all the time! It's enough to drive any mother to distraction!"

"Now, Mother!" grinned Andy, who knew that her bark was much worse than her bite. "I haven't come to much grief yet, have I?"

"My stars!" exclaimed Mrs. Lane. "Didn't you come home one day all banged up from having to jump out of your blazing plane in a parachute? I do declare your father should put his foot down on such foolishness!"

Andy's father came to his rescue.

"Mother, since our boy has become the most popular young man in the world, I'm afraid I'd make myself pretty *un*popular if I were to make him stop flying."

"I'm too hungry to read the paper, Dad," said Andy, eying with delight a huge pile of pancakes and maple syrup. "You read about this contest and tell me the details."

"The paper says that the first prize will be $75,000," explained Mr. Lane, reading the fine print following the headlines. "Carl Huntington, the wealthy sportsman, has deposited that amount in the bank, together with $25,000 for a second prize.

"It is to be a catch-as-catch-can race. That

is, any flier who sends his name in before the race may start. He must not leave before 6 A.M. on June first. He must start from the flying field at Mineola, or, if he wishes, he may take off from some other spot, but must fly over the starting line at Mineola before he is considered in the race.

"The fliers may go eastward or westward as they please. They may take any route they may choose, just so long as they are checked in by the judges at Mineola, San Francisco and Yokohama. If the planes are equipped with radio, they may send a message to the judges telling the time of expected arrival at these places, or they telegraph or cable from the last landing place. Then the judges will watch for them. The finish line will also be at Mineola."

"Gee, that's fair enough!" mused Andy. "It leaves the racers free to make their own plans without being handicapped too much by hard and fast rules. I'll bet there will be twenty-five planes lined up on the field when the starting gun goes off."

"Well, I hope you won't go chasing off on any such wild goose chase!" said his mother hopefully.

"Listen, Mother," laughed Andy. "You know you wouldn't have me miss a race like this for anything, would you? Just think, the first prize is $75,000! I'll bet I could win it easily, too! I'd be almost sure of it if I could only get the 'Apex' and the crew that flew with me to the South Pole!"

"We don't need any more money, silly boy!" replied Mrs. Lane. "With all the prizes you won on those other ridiculous flights and what you and Dad have made out of the carburetor you invented together, we have more right now than we know what to do with."

"I don't think we have any right to interfere with Andy's plans, Mother," spoke up Mr. Lane. "He has shown us that he has a pretty level head on his young shoulders. Since he has grown to be famous, the public really expects great things of him."

His eyes went to the great glass case where stood shelf after shelf of medals, cups, statues

and a thousand other gifts of gold, silver and precious stones, which had poured into their home from every corner of the world since their son's two history-making flights. He realized that his son belonged as much to the world as he did to his own family. They had little right to hold him back.

The telephone had already started to ring. Mr. Lane was kept busy answering scores of calls from newspaper reporters and from private citizens wishing to know whether or not Andy would enter the race. Andy himself hated all the publicity which surrounded him and, although he had steadfastly refused to employ a secretary, he was very glad to have his father assume the work of seeing and talking to strangers in his place.

He had remained absolutely unspoiled throughout the past year while he was being worshipped by the entire world. He disliked to be followed down the streets by crowds of people, all of whom were thrilled to catch a close view of the idolized hero. He would have preferred to have remained unknown, provided

he could fly whenever and wherever he pleased.

"Andy," called his father from the telephone. "Mr. Avery wishes to talk with you."

Here was a call that Andy was glad to answer. Mr. Avery was president of the great Apex Aeroplane and Motor Company. He had bought the rights to the Lane Carburetor and had made it a very profitable thing for Andy and his father. He had also furnished the two great airplanes in which Andy had made the famous flights.

"Hello, Andy, my boy!" greeted Mr. Avery's kindly voice from the other end of the wire. "Have you read the morning papers?"

"I'll tell the world, I have!" replied Andy excitedly. "When I read the announcement, I knew I had another job ahead of me."

"When you came back from the South Pole you said that you wanted to fly around the world some day. Do you want to enter this race?"

"You bet I do!"

"All right. Come over to the factory this afternoon and we'll talk it over."

"Great! I'll be there right after college."

Then the boy called to Scotty, his constant companion on the ground and in the air. He was a much-travelled dog. A little over a year old, he had gone with his master on the fifteen day flight, looking down on nearly every great city east of the Mississippi. On the way to the South Pole he had seen most of the west coast of South America and the icy, desolate wastes of Antarctica.

Like his master, he was unspoiled by all his adventures and enjoyed a good romp as much as any other healthy young dog. Most of all he enjoyed flying.

So Andy and the pup raced out of the back door to the hangar. Since his last famous hop so much money had poured into the Lane family that Andy had been able to buy a very large piece of land right next to his house. Men with tractors had levelled it to form a perfect flying field plenty large enough for Andy's own little scout plane.

On the side nearest the house there was a small hangar. Attached to this was a workshop and laboratory where he and his father carried out their experiments.

Scotty beat his master to the hangar by a dozen yards and waited expectantly until the door was opened. Then with an excited yelp he begged to be lifted into the cockpit.

Andy stood beside his beloved plane for a moment, gazing at it for the thousandth time with eyes of loving admiration. He had bought it upon his return from his last great flight, since the plane that had been presented to him by the Apex Company had been destroyed by a fire in the air.

The tiny single wing and the slender, bullet-shaped fuselage shone with silver paint. Every exposed part of the mighty "Apex" motor was covered with highly polished nickel plate. The cockpit was richly upholstered in red Spanish leather. Beside his own seat was a special cushion equipped with a tiny safety belt for Scotty.

Andy tossed the pup in and climbed up after him. Scotty had already taken his place and, even before Andy had fastened his own, he buckled the straps that kept his little dog securely in place.

Then he pulled the starting lever and the powerful motor burst into roaring life. A short run over the smooth grass, then he pulled back on the stick. The silver nose of the little scout plane lifted straight up into the air and with a breath-taking zoom, he was on his way into the clouds.

For fifteen minutes the boy and the dog cavorted about the blue skies in their joy at being aloft once more. They felt like birds. They were detached from the earth, with the crowds of people chasing after them as though they were some strange beasts from a circus. Even when Andy pulled her over in a loop, the dog never stopped thumping the floorboards with his tail.

Now they had reached a spot in the air high over the athletic field of Newton College and Andy knew that he must come down or be late to his classes. Ever since his great flights the professors had been glad to give him leave of absence during his expeditions. He was almost the head of his class in the Engineering School and had caught up quickly with his work when

he returned to his studies. Besides, he had brought great honor to his college. Even more than a championship football eleven.

So Andy very reluctantly whirled his little ship into a final loop, then, throwing her into a tail spin, he came hurtling down to a thousand feet before straightening out into a gentle spiral. As soon as his wheels touched the ground, he taxied over to his parking space behind the grandstand and walked down the beautiful shady streets toward the college campus.

Waiting for him outside the recitation hall were a group of boys. They were all well known in undergraduate activities. One of them was Tom Worth, captain of the football team. Another was Roger Wheeler, captain of the baseball nine. Still another was Bill Matthews, president of the senior class. They were all members of the Beta Phi Beta Fraternity.

"Hello, Andy!" they called as he approached.

"Got a minute?" asked Worth.

"Just about," replied Andy good-naturedly as he joined them.

"Listen, Andy," said the football captain very earnestly. "A couple of months ago we asked you to pledge yourself to our fraternity. You told us that you weren't making any plans then, but you might decide before the college year was up. What do you say? We have a wonderful gang of fellows and the finest house on the campus. We'd like mighty well to have you join us."

This was the same bunch, thought Andy, that had looked down on him a little more than a year ago when he had ben forced to put on greasy overalls and work in the Hillside Garage three afternoons a week to pay his expenses through college. They had not asked him to join their fraternity when he had been poor and unknown. Nor had any other club seemed eager to enroll him. After the fifteen day flight, when money and world-wide fame had come to him, they were all anxious to make him a member of their various organizations. And after the South Pole flight, they had chased him all over the campus!

"It's mighty good of you fellows," he said slowly, "but I think now that I'll wait until

fall. I'm not going to be able to finish out this year and I'll have to work like a horse to get ahead in my class before I ask for another leave of absence. So I'm afraid I won't have time. Much obliged, though, for asking me."

"Leave of absence? You're going to enter the Round the World Race!" Several of the group shouted this question at the same time.

"Maybe!" laughed Andy. "Come on, we'd better get inside now, or we'll all be late."

Word of his coming flight spread around the college like wildfire, but as Andy had told the Dean he would have to leave school unless the fellows let him alone, very few questions were put to him personally. All the boys went out of their way, however, to speak to him and watched every move he made with interested and admiring eyes.

Shortly after his last class in the afternoon, Andy's little monoplane made a three-point landing on the grass in front of the immense factory of the Apex Aeroplane and Motor Company. What a change there had been in the fortunes of this company since his flight in the first "Apex"! At that time it had been a

small, struggling organization trying hard to market a wonderful engine and an equally marvellous plane against the competition of larger and more firmly established companies.

Then had come Andy's two flights. Orders for planes and motors had poured into the factory from all over the world. They had been forced to add several huge buildings to the modest little shop they had started with. Today they were one of the greatest manufacturing companies in the entire world of aviation. He was glad to have had such an important part in its upbuilding.

"Hello, Mr. Avery," he said as he entered the president's office. "Oh, hello, Mr. Seymore; I didn't know you were going to be here, too." Seated beside Mr. Avery was the president of the Superior Oil and Gas Company, who had had almost as large a part as Mr. Avery himself in the success of the previous flights.

It had been Mr. Seymore who had furnished the planes fitted up as tank ships, which had flown over Andy's plane and dropped oil, gas, and other supplies down to them without inter-

rupting the flight. The refuelling in the air had been Andy's idea, but the Superior Company had entered into it with such wholehearted cooperation that there had never been a hitch in the proceedings.

Andy had done his part for the Superior Oil Company, too. Mr. Seymore had been trying to extend the sales of Superior high-test gas for aviation use when Andy had made his first flight. The tremendous advertising that had resulted increased the sale of his products a thousand times.

"Well, Andy," smiled Mr. Avery, "I suppose your hands are itching to get at the joystick of the 'Apex'?"

"Which one?" asked the boy. "I love them both."

"Either one! They are both safe in our hangars. The old 'Apex' that carried you over the United States and the flying boat that took you to the Pole."

"Well, I don't suppose I need to tell you that I'd like to take one of them around the world. If I could have Joe Lamson again as relief pilot, Sam Allen as chief mechanic, and Dick

Williams as radio and all-round handy man, I'd feel sure that we would run away with the race!"

"Of course this race idea is so new that you haven't had time to figure out the details," said Mr. Seymore.

"You bet I have! While the race is new, I've been planning to fly around the world ever since I took my first long hop. I've studied my atlases until they're worn out! And every plan I've made for it will do just as well in a race."

"What kind of a plane would you want?"

"The 'Apex Number Two!' The South Pole ship."

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Avery. "A flying boat? Why, you'd have about twice as far to fly as the rest of them if you wanted to keep over the water. You'd have to fly down to the Gulf of Mexico and across the Isthmus of Panama to start with, and that alone would put you hopelessly behind in the race when the others would fly straight across country!"

"No, sir," replied Andy firmly. "After what we went through in that tri-motored flying boat,

I know we can go anywhere the airplanes will go. Of course, it would be pretty tough trying to land her on the dry ground, but not much worse than landing an airplane in the water. The three motors will keep us in the air and if one of them starts to go wrong, we can find a river or lake, or some other body of water and put her down in it."

"What can our fuelling ships do on this hop, Andy?" asked Mr. Seymore. "Would you plan to refuel in the air?"

"Surest thing!" replied the boy. "After these last two long hops, I know we can fly hundreds and hundreds of miles farther on a single filling of gas if we don't have to figure on the tremendous weight of a full load when we take off. We can fly with half again as much weight as we can take off with. On long distance flights that means a whale of a lot. Would you care to furnish a dozen or more tank planes along our route?"

"Andy," answered the president of the oil company gravely, "after what you have done for us, I'd have a refuelling plane every hundred miles all the way around the world if

necessary! You may have as many as you need. We have branch offices in nearly every big city in the world. Many of them already have planes to advertise our high-test gas. Wherever you want to refuel, we'll have the tank planes ready! Send me a list of the cities and I'll take care of the rest."

"Gee, that's wonderful!" exclaimed Andy. Then turning to Mr. Avery he asked, "Well, sir, what do you think, may I have the flying boat and the same old crew?"

"Why, certainly!" the older man said laughing. "That was all decided when I read the announcement of the race in this morning's paper!"

CHAPTER II

WHO IS H. BREWSTER?

When Andy and Scotty coasted down to a landing at the field behind their home, they found Sonny Collins waiting for them impatiently. David, or Sonny, as his friends called him, was Andy's closest pal, in spite of the fact that he had only recently passed his fourteenth birthday. The two had been friends for years and Andy had grown to depend more and more on his little friend's advice and help with every twelve months that rolled by.

Sonny was a radio fan of the most ardent variety. He owned the latest and most expensive apparatus that money could buy and had friends all over the world with whom he exchanged messages during the long hours of the night.

Although his father was sole owner of the Apex Company's most powerful business rival, the Collins Aeronautical Corporation, that fact

had not stopped Sonny from being at the radio sending key in constant touch with Andy throughout his two record-breaking flights. Indeed, after having saved Andy's life during the first hop, he had been taken almost to the South Pole during the second flight. This was so he might handle the radio end of the expedition.

"Hello, there, Sonny," called Andy as he saw the boy, with his big spectacles glistening in the sun, racing across the field to meet him, "I'm going round the world! Whoops!"

"Sure, I knew it!" and Sonny's great brown eyes danced.

"How did you know it?" demanded his friend.

"Why, I knew you wouldn't miss a good excuse like the race to sell the idea to the Apex people."

"Come on in to dinner?" laughed Andy giving Sonny a slap on his thin shoulders that almost knocked his glasses right off his pug nose. Scotty, pouty at not being greeted by the lad who was, next to his master, the very finest boy in the world, growled and nipped him on the leg.

"Why, hello, Scotty, you flying hound!" cried Sonny and gave him a shove that rolled him over in the grass. On the way to the house the small boy and puppy played at fighting until finally Scotty's teeth, which had grown long and sharp in the past few months, tore a hole in Sonny's trousers. Seeing this, the dog was very ashamed of himself and followed the two boys into the house looking the picture of misery, his tail between his legs and his ears laid back on his head.

Dinner at the Lane house was always an event in Sonny's rather lonely life. At his own home there were only himself and his Dad, with too many servants always in the way. Here, Mr. and Mrs. Lane and Andy always laughed and joked and the meals were so pleasant. Tonight things did not seem as cheerful as usual. Sonny knew, of course, that Andy's mother worried terribly about her son on these daring trips he made more and more often. So did Mr. Lane, although he did not show it so much. Still, they were both awfully good sports about it and did their best to pretend that they were as pleased as Andy himself at the news.

Mrs. Lane had to grumble about it, of course. She always did. She was perfectly sure that her boy was going to catch his death of cold, or something, for the climates were always changing as he flew over these great distances. She always made him take along his winter flannels and a bottle of pills for colds. Then, having seen these things safely in his bag, she felt better about the whole thing.

"Well," she declared, "the only thing I can say about this crazy notion of Andy's, is that it sounds a little more sensible than flying way down there to the South Pole. At least, he'll be flying over countries that have railroads and electric lights and everything!"

Sonny, who had likewise consulted his maps, did not tell her of the countless miles of uninhabited jungles, arid deserts and rolling oceans that the fliers would see pass underneath their wings. Instead he said gravely:

"That's right, Mrs. Lane. That's the reason I'm going along on this trip, too!"

Andy looked at the boy in the utmost astonishment.

"How do you get that way? Who is going

to handle the radio end from the ground this time?"

"Oh, ground men are easy enough to find! But on this trip you'll need someone who can link up a chain of amateur radio fans in every country that you're going to fly over. Then your messages can be relayed back and forth from the factory and you can keep in touch with what the other racers are doing. Besides, Andy Lane, you promised me that you'd take me on your next trip, so you've just got to!"

"Gee, Sonny, I'd love to have you go," said Andy, touched by the boy's eagerness. "But I'm sure your father would never in the world let you. You know there will probably be several fliers entering the race who will be using Collins planes and engines. It would look funny for the president's own son to be flying in a rival plane!"

"Well," said the youngster gleefully, "if that's your only reason, I'm going! Dad was so pleased with the way things went on my trip to the Bay of Whales on your South Pole flight that he told me I could go with you on your next hop. He *is* going to have a Collins plane flying

in the race, in fact, several of them. Art Woods, his chief test pilot, is going to enter, and there will probably be others, too. But you know that he and Mr. Avery have become great friends and I don't think he'd mind quite so much if you won the race. So he's promised, and you promised long ago, so that's settled!"

"Kind of looks that way!" Andy admitted. "I think we could use an extra hand without trouble in this race. Besides, when I make a promise, I keep it! So if you really have gotten your father's consent, I'll see that you go along."

The next afternoon Andy and Sonny met Joe Lamson, Sam Allen and Dick Williams at the factory for an inspection of the "Apex Number Two," as the flying boat which had been taken to the Pole had been named.

Mr. Avery had already had the immense plane taken over on wheeled trucks to the launching runway on Long Island Sound. Andy's heart gave a big jump as he saw her standing there on the ways, just as she had looked when she had taken off on the flight

which had thrilled the whole world. She looked ready to go at this instant, as she stood there high out of water, the warm sun glistening on her polished mahogany sides and three mechanics already swarming over her motors, oiling them and getting them ready for the coming test.

The three men and two boys climbed up the ladder which led to the door high on her smooth hull. Sam, of course, disappeared through the hatchway leading up to the wing where he joined the mechanics at the motor. Andy noticed that Sam was uneasy whenever anyone else touched his beloved engines. Dick and Joe soon followed Sam.

Andy and Sonny started their inspection with the open cockpit at the extreme bow. They rolled back the steel shutter that covered it and protected it from wind, rain, and snow. Then they examined the wide-mouthed filler pipes which led back to the various gasoline and oil tanks.

It was in this cockpit, with the storms raging around them, that Sam and Dick had stood while the refuelling planes, all the way from

New York to the Bay of Whales, on the edge of the Antarctic continent, had dropped their precious loads of fuel and supplies.

The young pilot's eyes rested lovingly on the instrument board which they found when they had crawled through the passageway and entered the pilot's compartment. Here were all those radium-painted dials and gauges by which the pilot was able to tell the condition of his plane through all those long, dangerous watches of the night.

There were two kinds of compasses, magnetic and earth inductor. Three tachometers to tell how fast each of the mighty 500 horsepower engines were turning the propellers. There was an air speed indicator to tell how fast the "Apex" was hurtling through the air. A drift indicator to show how fast she was being skidded off her course by the wind. An altimeter to show how high she was in the air. A spirit level to show whether she was heading up or down, or on the level. Also another one to show if, or how far, she was banking over to one side. A gasoline gauge for each of the half-dozen tanks.

There were oil pressure gauges, ammeters to show how fast the batteries were being charged, a barometer to predict changes of the weather, thermometers to show the temperatures both in and outside the cabins, a clock and all sorts of other gauges. Each of these had its pointer and figures outlined in luminous paint that they might be read as easily at night as in the daytime.

The two comfortably upholstered seats faced the double control wheels, where Andy and Joe had fought their way back to safety after having been capsized over the burning volcano of Mt. Erebus. Andy's hands itched to hold the great wheel once more and push forward those great throttles which stood between the two seats, close to the hand of each pilot.

They went back to Andy's cabin, where the boy fingered his desk longingly and pulled out his Pullman berth just to see that it was working properly. He stepped to the double windows of safety glass and looked down, imagining for the moment that he was watching some great jungle, or some strange tropic city flash by. He could hardly wait for the starting day,

June 1. It seemed years instead of weeks away!

"Well, how do you like your radio room?" he asked the younger boy as the two entered a cabin which was almost entirely given over to panels, dials, meters, and every sort of electrical equipment. "You and Dick will sleep in these upper and lower berths and 'spell' each other at the key. Sam slept there, too, the last trip, but we're having a berth built for him in the living compartment."

Sonny was so overcome and excited that he turned away so Andy could not see the tears which *would* come in his eyes. He could not believe that he, too, was to be one of the picked crew to race this wonderful plane! Finally he was able to look over the equipment with the eye of an expert. Not even Dick, who had once been an operator on a transatlantic steamer, knew as much about radio as did this fourteen-year old fan.

"It's a wonderful set," he admitted, "and on your South Pole hop it did everything you could expect it to do. But Dad has given me some new short wave stuff that will bring a lot

more distance to this set. I'd like to have it along."

"Bring along a feather bed and a croquet set if you want!" laughed Andy. "The only thing we're interested in is getting the messages we want to receive."

Joe's room came next. It was almost a duplicate of Andy's except that it lacked the desk and the chart tables that Andy needed for his navigating. Workmen had finished, just that morning, putting on a new coat of fast-drying lacquer in the living cabin. The comfortable wicker chairs, the drop tables for eating and reading and the well-placed electric lights all gave the room a cheerful, comfortable appearance.

Sonny longed to eat his first meal in it while the great ship was in the air. Andy pulled out a panel from the wall and a fully fitted out electric stove popped into view. Other panels concealed lockers for the aluminum pots and dishes and the stores of supplies that were most often used, such as sugar, coffee, tea, salt and pepper.

Then came the long passageway leading back

to the tail. On each side of the corridor were numbered lockers for the storage of supplies. Although Sonny had visited the "Apex" before her last hop, he had not examined her closely and was amazed to see what a tremendous load she could carry into the air.

"Gee, Andy," he exclaimed, "I'd like to live aboard this ship all the rest of my life!"

"It's a wonderful plane, old-timer," agreed the pilot. "But even though it *is* the largest flying boat in the world, it is still a small, cramped place when you keep five men in it for several weeks. You feel that you'd give anything for a good long walk on the solid ground."

"Not this baby!" called a joyful voice from the trap door which led up into the wing. "I get more exercise in one day," continued Sam, "when I'm crawling over these motors than you lazy birds get in a month lying around the cabins. Come on up and see the pretty new engines."

The three factory mechanics had left the "Apex" and the two boys joined Sam, Dick and Joe in an inspection of the new motors.

Along the wing, leading from the hatchway to each of the three engines was a railed gangway, or cat-walk. It was Sam's duty to clip his safety belt to the rail and inspect and adjust these motors every few hours during the flight. In front of each 500 horse power motor was a thing which looked like a thick tube. When Andy pulled a little lever, Sonny was astonished to see a steel shutter unroll and drop clear to the wing. It made a perfect windscreen for the mechanic while he worked on the engine.

"Lads and lassies, I'm sure glad that we aren't flying to Siberia, Alaska, or some such icy place, this time," remarked Sam. "My fingers are still cold from the chill they got while I was petting these engines over the South Pole! Seems as though every time we get into trouble, Andy, it has to be over some place where a fellow can't get warm. I crave a little hot weather!"

"You'll sing another tune before we get back to our starting place this time," laughed Andy. "We'll fly over some places that will melt some of that extra layer of fat off your bones!"

"Good!" cheered the round faced mechanic.

"How do these engines look?" asked Andy. "Sister, I watched 'em myself on the test bench," stated Sam. "If there's a better motor in the whole world than these three right here, I'll eat it, spark plugs and all!"

"You'd eat anything, at that!" agreed Dick. "You are the eatingest man I ever saw, especially on a flight."

The laugh was on Sam, but he was such a wonderful cook that nobody begrudged him a healthy appetite.

"Well, let's take her up in a few days for a test hop," suggested Andy. "Meanwhile let's come over here every day and go over her with a fine tooth comb getting her into shape."

One afternoon, nearly two weeks after the first inspection of the "Apex," Andy dropped into Mr. Avery's office to discuss some of the details of the flight. When nearly through the conference the president said:

"Andy, I met Mr. Huntington, the man who is offering the prizes for the race. He gave me a list of the fliers who have already entered their names as starters. He expects some

others to come in before the final date, but most of the important ones are here."

Andy scanned the list eagerly. As he looked over it, he felt a sinking of the heart. Some of the very greatest names in aviation were there, names of men who had been flying when he himself had been in kindergarten. He could hardly realize that he, Andy Lane, a boy of nineteen, could be considered a possible winner against such internationally famous aviators.

Three famous Frenchmen had entered, two of them war aces whose names were known all over the world. Two Britishers, one of them the chief pilot of the great passenger line which ran from Croyden to Eastern Europe. A Pole, already noted for his reckless daring. An Italian, with many long distance records to his credit. A dozen Americans, some of them well known air pilots. Art Woods, chief test pilot of the Collins Aeronautical Corporation was one of these.

"Hello," exclaimed Andy staring at Mr. Avery in astonishment. "H. Brewster, of France! Who can that be? It simply can't be Herbert Brewster? I can't believe it, even if

he did go straight to France after we spoiled his attempt to steal our plane near the Pole."

"If I knew for sure that H. Brewster meant our old enemy, I'd be tempted to withdraw your name from the flight!" stated Mr. Avery. "If he goes along, he will have just one ambition in life. That will be to beat you, if he has to crash your ship and kill you all to do it!

"He nearly wrecked the first 'Apex' on the fifteen day flight," the president continued, hotly, his face red with the wrath that always filled him when he heard Brewster's name. "He hated you then. When you were good enough to risk your own life and the lives of the others in the crew by rescuing him down there on the polar ice cap, he showed how much he hated you by trying to steal your ship and leave you to die on the ice.

"Then, when that story leaked out, he didn't dare to come back to this country. I do know, Andy, that Brewster went to France and secured a position with a big airplane company. I'm very much afraid that this name is his, but I don't know what I can do about it. I suppose your heart is absolutely set upon entering this

race yourself?" he concluded doubtfully.

"Of course it is!" replied Andy anxiously. "Please don't even think of giving it up! I don't believe I'll even see him, anyway."

"Why not?"

"In the first place, since the 'Apex' is a flying boat, we won't be on the field at the take-off. In the second place, I hear that almost every one of the other planes is going around the world in an easterly direction. That is, they'll head right across the Atlantic first, to avoid the very dangerous westerly crossing which has already cost so many lives.

"Since we will be safer over water than we are over land, I'm going to jump the 'Apex' over the most dangerous stretch while the engines are still fresh. I'll head straight across the United States first, making my own trip around the world in the opposite direction to that taken by almost all the other fliers.

"I might pass Brewster somewhere half-way around the world, but the chances are that I'll never even see him."

"Goodness, I hope not!" replied Mr. Avery very gravely.

CHAPTER III

THE ENEMY TAKES THE OFFENSIVE

Never had the public interest in flying been keyed up to such a high pitch of excitement as during the last two weeks before the start of the great race. All during the month of May, news of the event was never missing from the front pages of the newspapers all over the world.

Nearly every fast transatlantic steamship arriving in New York carried among its passengers some famous foreign ace of the air who immediately established his headquarters at Mineola, set up his great plane and conducted his last minute tests of plane and motor.

On the sixteenth of May, Herbert Brewster landed in the United States, bringing with him a fast monoplane built by the Comet Company of Paris. Andy Lane read the accounts of Brewster's return with troubled eyes. He could not believe this man had turned over a new

leaf. He felt certain that his enemy would stoop to any methods to win this time from his rival.

But the boy was too busy to worry about Brewster very long. He and the rest of the crew of the giant "Apex" spent every waking hour at work upon the ship, grooming her for the mighty test that was to come. While Andy and Joe spent their time flying her and testing her various instruments, Sam and Dick labored over the motors until they could find nothing more to do. Then they did the same things over again.

Sonny, too, was busy. His father, after being undecided for days, had at last given his complete approval of the flight, though warning him that there were several Collins airplanes that were in the flight to win. He told the boy that although he would be a member of the crew of a competing plane, the father would have to give his entire support to planes carrying the Collins name and driven by the famous Collins "Hurricane" engines. This, of course, was only fair and Sonny was quite content to have it so.

Each afternoon, then, when the fourteen year old boy had finished his classes at school, he hurried over to the shore of Long Island and went to work on the radio installation. The ten-tube set which had functioned so perfectly during the South Pole hop was not removed, but, in addition, Sonny rigged up his own short-wave sending and receiving set with which he had exchanged messages with amateurs all over the world.

He even had his own call letters, ZXBX, transferred to the "Apex." Those letters were better known to radio amateurs everywhere than the call that had previously belonged to the flying boat. Each evening, when work on the plane had been called off for the day, Sonny went back to his radio room at home and with his emergency set told his friends of the ether his plans for a great chain of amateur radio fans to help him in the coming race.

From China, India, Italy, France, and many other countries he received messages of support. Foreign boys with stations like his own promised to do everything they could to pass his messages on promptly. They would let him

know, too, the latest news of competing planes as quickly as possible.

Sonny was in the seventh heaven of delight and his father's anxious eyes rested on him frequently as he bent over his sending key. He looked so small and frail to be going on such a dangerous trip! But Mr. Collins did not have the heart to put a stop to it.

The second morning after Brewster's arrival in New York, Mr. Avery telephoned Andy in great excitement.

"Well, I think our old friend Brewster has started to play his funny little tricks again, Andy," came his voice over the wire.

"What has he done?" asked Andy, alarmed.

"Two strangers slugged one of the watchmen who were standing guard over the 'Apex.' When the other arrived, the men were cutting her wires with a pair of snippers. The second guard pulled his gun and drove them off. If he had let them alone another minute, we'd have had to re-rig the entire plane!"

Andy gave an exclamation of dismay and Mr. Avery went on.

"I'm having the damage repaired this morn-

ing and I've posted extra guards over the plane. No one is allowed to come within fifty yards of her but our own employees."

"That's a good idea. I'll be over to see her this afternoon."

"All right, but watch yourself! Be sure and examine your own ship before you take off. Remember that jump you made in a parachute!"

"Could I ever forget it?" Andy laughed as he hung up the receiver of the telephone.

As he and Scotty entered his hangar, shortly after noon that same day, he looked over his little scout plane with extra care. From tail fittings to propeller he examined every bolt, nut and cotter key. He pulled at every wire and pushed on every strut. Everything looked to be in order as he stood in front of it at the end of his inspection. Suddenly his eyes narrowed as they glanced at the propeller. He stepped forward and looked at it again. Then he shook it hard. There seemed to be a slight looseness at the hub which held it to the crankshaft.

On a sudden impulse he lifted an end wrench from its rack against the wall and tested one of the nuts which bolted the propeller to the

hub. To his horrified amazement the nut moved so easily that he could have twisted it in his fingers alone!

"Well, what do you think of that?" he exclaimed to himself and to Scotty, who stood there waiting to be lifted into his seat. "The dirty rats have unloosened all these bolts and even taken the trouble to wire them all in again to make them look as if they had not been tampered with! There was play enough in each of those bolts for them to have sheered off after the first few thousand revolutions. Then I'd have had to come down, wherever I was. I supposed they thought and hoped I'd be right over the heart of New York!"

Mr. Avery's face was crimson with rage as Andy told him of the attempt someone had made to wreck his little plane.

"They're desperate this time, Andy! Brewster has almost lost his reputation and is determined to regain it by winning this race. I don't think he'll even stop at murder!"

An hour later the entire crew of the "Apex" was seated around the president's polished mahogany table.

"I'm going to change our plans," stated Mr. Avery looking slowly around the little group. "I'm not going to take any further chances of having one of you injured or kidnapped at the last minute, as Sam was just before the South Pole hop. And I'm not going to risk having the 'Apex' damaged, either.

"I want you to take the 'Apex' tomorrow morning, as early as possible, and fly her to a small island at the mouth of the Kennebec River in Maine where I have a summer home. It is completely isolated from the world. There's not even a telephone connecting it with the mainland.

"I'll make an announcement to the newspapers that you are off on a practice hop and that you will be back in plenty of time for the take-off. But not one soul is to know where you have gone, except for the few trusted employees of this factory who will have to take you supplies and spare parts.

"Sonny's radio will keep us in touch with each other. I'll have two shifts of radio operators on duty here at the factory beginning tomorrow morning. If you want anything in a

hurry, radio for it and I'll send a plane immediately.

"On the morning of the race, plan to be over the Mineola Field an hour before the start. I'll have a refuelling ship meet you there and fill up your tanks. Then you'll circle around the field until the take-off."

"Why, Mr. Avery, we'll have to say goodbye, now, then!" exclaimed Andy, very much surprised at this new plan.

"Yes, Son," smiled his friend. "I guess we will. But I'll be at the other end of the radio all the time, you know."

"Mr. Avery, I have a suggestion to make," offered Sam seriously. "These engines we have now in the plane are in wonderful condition, but with Brewster on the job with his dirty work I'm no longer sure of anything. Why not start testing up three or four more engines here in the factory so if anything should happen to those in the ship you could send us some new ones?"

"Fine idea, Sam," nodded the president. "I'll start them through the motor test this afternoon."

"What about all the supplies for the trip?" asked Joe. "We haven't put aboard half our load yet. The medical supplies aren't in, nor the light clothes for the tropics. There's a list a mile long that hasn't been attended to."

"I'll have two men check over your list against the stuff that has already been put aboard. We'll send the missing items to you by seaplane in a few days."

"One of those men to check that list will be me!" declared Sam so positively that the rest burst out laughing. "If so much as a cotter pin is missing I'll come back and lick every man out there in the factory, three at a time. If a spark plug is forgotten, I'll feel strong enough to lick my weight in wildcats!"

Then followed a few hours of frenzied shopping by Andy and his mother. They dashed to the store which had outfitted the crew for the last flight and found its stock of clothing for the tropics just as complete as it had been for the Antarctic. The clerk knew just what would be needed and in no time at all, the rear compartment of Andy's roadster was jammed with boxes and packages of clothes for all the

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different climates he was to pass through.

He still had at home the fur lined garments he had worn over the polar ice. These would do for the periods of biting cold weather when they were flying at great heights. So most of his purchases had been warm weather things.

The newspaper reporters, who had been playing hide-and-seek with Andy ever since he had announced that he was entering the race, were as usual clustered around his house when he returned. The motion picture machines whirred, cameras clicked and the reporters nearly mobbed him when they saw his roadster piled high with bundles.

"What's doing, Andy?" their leader asked. There was no dodging them this time, so Andy gave up with a smile.

"Going to take a test hop with the 'Apex,' " he admitted.

"Where are you going?"

"That's a secret!"

For ten minutes they asked questions which he answered as carefully as he could, being very sure, however, that he was not giving away any of his plans.

CHAPTER IV

OFF TO THE HIDING PLACE

The next morning, long before dawn, the crew of the "Apex" including Scotty, gathered, yawning, around the great ship which stood on her greased runway near the water's edge. A row of brilliant lights had been hung up around the plane and all night long Mr. Avery, Sam and two men from the factory had been busy checking each item in the lockers and stowing aboard as many last minute things as they had been able to buy since their decision was made to leave at once for their hiding place in Maine. The rest of the things would follow by sea-plane.

Mr. Collins, even though he was a dangerous rival because of the planes he was flying in the race, had been let into the secret. His son was to go along so he had come to the waterfront to see him off. Since the first wonderful flight

of the first "Apex" he and Mr. Avery had become fast friends.

"This is a pretty tough proposition for a business man," laughed Mr. Collins as he and Mr. Avery watched the hustle and bustle of the starting preparations. "Here I ought to be putting a stick of dynamite under that old plane of yours. Six Collins ships will be at the starting line on June 1. Yet here I stand, watching my only son trying to beat his old dad and more than half hoping that he'll do it!"

"Yes," agreed Mr. Avery thoughtfully, "we ought to be pulling together instead of against each other, Collins."

"Perhaps we can figure out a way of doing it," suggested Sonny's father hopefully. "Let's have breakfast together when the boys are out of the way."

"Fine!" said the other. "Looks as though they were about ready to shove off now!"

There was a final handshaking all around. The three great motors of the "Apex" roared into action, the mighty plane slid down the smooth runway on the massive cradle and in a few minutes had floated free.

Andy, leaning far out of the window, saw the cradle bob to the surface and nodded to Joe, who opened the throttles. Slowly at first, then faster and faster, the mahogany hull drove through the water. As the "Apex" gained speed, the bottom lifted until it was just skimming the tops of the tiny waves. Then the bumping against the planks stopped. The ship was in the air!

Joe cut down the motors, turned one off entirely and looked at Andy with a wide grin.

"Well, we're off again, Andy, old scout!"

"You bet! For the third time now, on a big hop. Hope our luck holds out!"

Sonny, standing in the doorway behind the pilot's room, holding Scotty in his arms, squeezed the pup tight to him, enjoying the warmth and companionship of the little dog. After all, he was only fourteen, and this was a pretty big undertaking. He shivered a little from excitement and joy!

"Gee, this is too good to be true!" he muttered to himself. "I hope nothing will happen between now and the time the race begins! I won't believe that I'm actually going around

the world until we hear the starting gun and I'm still in this plane!"

He gazed over the shoulders of the two pilots into the early morning haze that hung over the Sound. He could still see Long Island on his right, for they were keeping close to its sandy shores. On the left, the coasts of New York and Connecticut were lost in the fog ahead where the Sound began to widen.

Above, the skies were partly overcast by gray, heavy clouds, the blue of the heavens shining through between their edges.

"Look, Andy, there's another plane," he called pointing to a tiny glistening speck which darted through one cloud mass after another, heading in exactly the same direction as the "Apex."

"Golly," muttered Andy, his forehead wrinkled in a worried frown, "I don't like that much! I'll bet it is one of those newspaper reporters following us to find out where we are going."

"Let's duck him!" suggested Sam, who had come out of his cabin to see what the trouble was.

"We can try, but those birds up there have a fast monoplane. It's lots faster than ours. Our only hope is to lose them in the clouds," responded Andy watching for the little plane above them to reappear. At last, to make sure they were being followed, he swung the "Apex" about and headed due north, cutting straight across the Sound. When the monoplane again appeared, it, too, swung to the north, still keeping itself hidden as much as possible.

"Somehow I have a hunch," declared Joe at last. "I don't believe a reporter would be as sneaky about following us as that bird is. I'll bet it has something to do with Brewster!"

The same thought had occurred to all of them, yet they had not wanted to voice it. The shadow of Brewster's evil hand seemed to hang over them on each of the great flights they had made.

"Climb a little, Joe," directed Andy. "Let's dive into that big cloud, then swing east again."

In a few moments they had plunged headlong into the cold wet interior of the cloud. For eight or ten minutes Joe flew by his instruments alone, swinging the great ship back to her

course up the Sound. Then she hurtled out into broad daylight again, while the five members of the crew strained their eyes for the other plane.

"I don't see her!" breathed Andy with a sigh of relief. "Whether it was Brewster or a friend, I'm mighty glad we shook him off."

"Gentlemen, I hate to interrupt," came Sam's cheery voice, "but I have the feeling that it's time to eat something. Personally, I'm not much for a glass of orange juice and a cup of coffee, even if that is considered the proper breakfast. I'd like a good square meal. Besides, it will be good practice for me to throw a real feed over the electric stove. Who will join me?"

"Listen to that!" scoffed Andy. "Sam gets hungry every time he takes both feet off the ground. Honestly, Sam, the mere sight of an airplane reminds you of food. Well, go to it, Fatty, and we'll all be with you!"

As the "Apex" plunged over Block Island, all hands enjoyed bacon and eggs, toast, and coffee. The keen morning air had sharpened their appetites and they ate as though they

had not partaken of food for at least a week.

Sonny was almost too excited to swallow his food. Eating in almost as much comfort as though he were being served in his own dining room at home, he could hardly believe he was a thousand feet in the air. Andy, Sam, and Dick sat around the table as though this wonderful experience were an everyday affair. They didn't seem at all excited. But Sonny had never been so thrilled in his life. It was a wonderful experience for a fourteen year old, and he knew it!

CHAPTER V

DISASTER

Just before noon they looked down upon the great mouth of the Kennebec River. There were hundreds and hundreds of little spruce-covered islands looking like emeralds floating in a sapphire blue mirror. There were so many of them that it was quite a task finding the one they were hunting for. They knew that Mr. Avery's island contained only one house, so they searched above dozens that were dotted with hotels, summer cottages and camps.

At last they found Avery Island. It was far away from any of the other islands. A deep cove, or inlet, on the south side had a curving entrance which made an ideal place to hide the "Apex" away unnoticed.

As they slipped down to the smooth surface of the water and taxied into the cove, they saw that the flying boat would not be visible from

the main channel when anchored near the beach on the far end. The chances were good that in this isolated spot they could stay hidden until the midnight before the race when they would start back to Mineola.

What a perfect spot this was to spend the next few days! Sam, with a wild shout, appeared in a bathing suit, looking like an animated tub, and dived out of the open cockpit before they had reached their anchorage. As soon as they had moored the "Apex" the rest followed suit and splashed around in the water like school-boys on a holiday.

They knew that New York would now be filled with intense excitement. Everyone would be thinking and talking about the race, and they would be unable to keep their minds off it even for a moment. Here they had little to do but keep the plane in good trim and loaf around.

Sam got out the collapsible boat, which was made of rubber, and put it together. From somewhere else he produced several fishing lines and invited the rest to join him in a fishing party. He was a better mechanic than a

boatman, however, for he fell backwards out of his seat the first time he gave a hearty pull at the oars.

So four quiet, happy days passed. A seaplane arrived from Mineola, laden down with supplies that had been missing when the "Apex" had made her hasty departure. The crew transferred these to the big plane in a few hours. Then the seaplane left and the boys very quickly stored the things in the numbered lockers, carefully noting the location of each item for quick finding when some sudden need might arise.

Sonny came to feel very much at home in the cozy little radio cabin he shared with Dick. Scotty divided his time between Andy and Sonny, sleeping on one bed for a while, then dragging himself, yawning, to the other.

Each afternoon Sonny tuned in the ten-tube set to the broadcasting range to hear the news bulletins of the day, most of which concerned the coming race.

They learned that twelve planes would start, several others having abandoned the flight for one cause or another. But those twelve that

remained were the pick of the lot. Their pilots were airmen who would dare anything. Their planes were the latest and best machines obtainable anywhere.

The next to the last morning before the start, a strange airplane appeared flying high overhead. The stranger wheeled in great wide circles, as though examining every foot of the ground and water beneath him. Suddenly he seemed to see the "Apex," for he nosed over and spiralled down to within a thousand feet of the water. Then he flew directly across the floating plane and circled once around her as if to make sure she was the plane he sought. Then, without even a wave of the hand, her pilot gave his motor the gun and streaked away at full speed.

For a few minutes the five sat on the wing where they had climbed to observe the strange plane. Salt water dripped down from their wet bathing suits and flowed down over the smooth curved surface of the wing in little rivulets.

"Well," said Andy at last, "if that bird was looking for us, he sure found us!"

"He was looking for us, all right," said Joe gloomily. "He was taking plenty of time in his hunt until he saw us. Then he flew straight off."

"Maybe it was a reporter," suggested Dick, although his tone was not very hopeful.

"Perhaps," admitted Andy. "But just the same, we had better watch our steps pretty carefully and see that no one comes snooping around here."

"Snooping around?" repeated Sam. "There hasn't been a soul near this island since we came. It's so quiet here that a man's footsteps would sound like a bass drum!"

That night, shortly before midnight, Mr. Avery's house, perched high on the top of the hill that overlooked the cove, burned to the ground. The boys from the "Apex," roused by Scotty's frantic barking, went ashore and tried to save what they could of the furniture. By the time they had reached the top of the hill, the building, built of light, green pine, was blazing like a bonfire.

They managed to pull a few pieces of furniture out of the living room but the flames ate

at the house so swiftly that they finally had to cease their efforts and stand by helplessly. In two hours nothing was left but a huge mass of glowing embers.

"We'd better go back to the plane," said Andy as the crew of the "Apex" looked sadly at the ruins. "Sonny can radio the news to Mr. Avery."

As they reached the beach and prepared to shove off in their rubber boat, Scotty suddenly stopped short in his tracks and began to bark in a small, frightened voice. Then Andy shouted,

"Fellows, there's somebody on the 'Apex'!"

From where they stood they could see the beam of a pocket flashlight playing around the wing of the flying boat, flitting from engine to engine. Without further words they all scrambled into the rubber boat and rowed as fast as they could pull the clumsy craft out toward the huge black bulk of the "Apex."

Before they had covered half their distance, they heard the loud popping of a speed boat's motor, the churning of its gear box, then the splashing of its propeller. Its motor speeded

up, then settled down to a steady drone. The prowlers had made their getaway!

A feeling of the darkest despair settled over Andy as he pulled on his oars. He knew that those who had just made their escape must have set fire to Mr. Avery's house. Their aim was, of course, to get the crew away from the "Apex" so that they might board her. He dreaded to go aboard to see what damage had been done! From the grim silence of his friends he knew that the same unhappy thoughts must be going through their minds. Even the cheerful Sam did not have the courage to make one of his usual jokes.

At last their boat brushed up against the towering side of the "Apex" and Andy scrambled aboard, followed by the others. At first sight he believed that they had frightened away the strangers just in time. An axe lay on the cabin floor. A section of the floorboards had been chopped away. It had evidently been the intention of the enemy to cut through the bottom of the hull and sink the ship at her moorings. Hearing the boat approaching just before they had cleared a hole in the floor large

enough to let the axe reach the hull, they had been forced to let that plan go and to make their escape.

Without a second glance at the damage in the cabins, Sam had clambered up the ladder and was on the wing, flashlight in his hand. With the first glance at his beloved motors, he bellowed:

"My stars, fellows, come here!"

They swarmed up on the wing and in the white beam of the flashlight they saw that there would probably be no race for the "Apex." Two of the motors had been hopelessly wrecked. With some heavy instrument, probably the axe, the enemy had smashed the cylinders, crank cases, and almost everything else on the two engines that an axe could reach.

A hasty inspection showed that the third motor had not been touched. The intruder must have known that the "Apex" could not even take off with but one engine in working order, and had not taken the time or trouble to wreck it.

CHAPTER VI

REPAIRS

For a few moments the crew stood there, absolutely aghast at the sudden failure of all their plans. Then Andy showed the stuff of which he was made. The courage that had made him the world-wide hero that he was.

"Well, fellows, this is a pretty kettle of fish! But let's get busy! Sonny, you dash off a full report to Mr. Avery over the radio. Tell him we must have two new engines here the first thing tomorrow morning. Tell him, too, about his house having burned. The rest of us will turn to and unship these engines. We'll toss them into the water and have the engine beds all clear, ready for the new motors when they get here. Beat it, Sonny!"

Sonny beat it! Without a word he scuttled down the hatchway like a jack rabbit into its hole. In another two minutes he had established connection with the Apex factory. Mr.

Avery, as was his custom when a great flight was on, had moved his army cot into his office. He stood by the side of the radio operator at the other end while the last of Sonny's message was coming through the air. Within thirty seconds of his receipt of the complete report, Sonny's flying pencil was writing down his reply.

"Forget summer house. Covered by insurance. Will start two engines down to you in seaplane within two hours. Coming along myself. Cheer up, you'll have plenty of time."

The young radio operator had not been at his instrument more than five minutes, but when he returned once more to the wing, work was already in full swing.

Sam had run two electric lights up from the cabin and had put one over each engine. Andy had made himself Sam's assistant on one engine, Dick and Joe were paired on the second. They were having a race to see which motor bed would be cleared first. Already small parts were being tossed into the water as they were unbolted or pried off.

"Come on, Ivory-head, what did the boss

say?'' called Andy as the horn-rimmed spectacles appeared over the hatchway. Sonny read the message.

''Great!'' exclaimed Andy. ''We'll make it yet. Sonny, you stand by to run errands, now, and make yourself generally useful.''

All the rest of the night they labored at top speed, but with exceeding care, lest they drop a heavy part that might tear through the fragile fabric of the wing and increase the damage that had already been done.

Just as the tall pines began to whisper with the first puffs of wind accompanying the dawn, they heard the pulsing purr of a distant airplane engine.

''That's an 'Apex' motor!'' cried Sam joyfully.

In five minutes a great twin-pontooned seaplane had skimmed down to the surface of the water and was taxiing in to the cove. As it drew close, Andy saw that Mr. Avery was the pilot. It was the first he had ever known that the president of the company could fly at all. With him were three of the most expert mechanics of the Apex factory.

"All right, Joe," Andy called. "Start that good engine and drive us up on the beach. There are four on that plane and five on this one. It will be much easier transferring the motors on the hard beach and all nine of us can push the 'Apex' back into the water when we are ready to leave."

In a few moments both craft were standing wing to wing on the firm white sand. It was characteristic of Mr. Avery that except for his first quick glance toward the still smoking ruins of his once beautiful house on the hill top, he did not even look at it again, or mention it. He devoted himself to the job at hand, that of getting the "Apex" ready to fly over the starting line at Mineola at six o'clock the following morning.

He stripped off his expensive tweed coat and worked right with the mechanics, showing that he knew as much or more about the "Apex" engines as the best of them.

It was a heart-breaking task, the moving of those huge five hundred horsepower motors, weighing about eight hundred pounds each. By sheer power of their husky muscles, they moved them out of the seaplane across the

sand and up on the towering wing of the "Apex" without derricks or machinery to help them. When the two engines rested at last on the supports that had been cleaned off by the all-night work of Andy and his gang, Mr. Avery looked at his watch.

"Boys," he called, "have you had anything to eat since dinner last night?"

"No," replied Sam sadly. "And my insides feel as hollow as a bass drum!"

"Well, there's no sense in working our heads off to get you ready to go if you're so tired out that you can't do a good job of flying in the air. Now, Sam, you knock off, take Sonny with you, and get the best breakfast you know how to make. We'll eat in shifts. The crew of the 'Apex' will eat first, while the rest of us are coupling things up here. Then we'll quit while your gang is working and eat our own breakfast. Those are orders, Sam, so step lively!"

The boys had not realised how tired and hungry they were until they sat down to the table. Then Andy's tired hands fell to shaking so he could hardly get the hot food up to his

mouth. He had scarcely sat down for more than twelve hours, most of which time he had been doing the heaviest kind of work. The wisdom of Mr. Avery's command became clear when they were half through the delicious meal. Their nerves became normal once more, and their aching muscles no longer twitched and shook. The future began to look bright again and they began to forget their troubles. When they returned to the wing, they fell to with a will, while the others ate and took their brief rest.

It was tedious work for all of them. Andy, for all his knowledge of planes and motors, had scarcely realised how many hundreds of parts, small and large, had to be installed and connected with the greatest care when the motors were changed.

In spite of the three skilled mechanics who had come with Mr. Avery, the work dragged. They had to work in shifts, for there was not room around the two motors for all nine men. Sam and Dick, having the greatest mechanical skill of those in the crew of the "Apex," stayed right on the job, refusing to be relieved for an

instant except when they ate. Night overtook them as they toiled and the trouble lights were again hung over the engines.

As the final adjustments were being made, Mr. Avery came to Andy.

"Son," he said, "you are going to get off to a bad start. You will probably be a couple of hours late at the starting line. Perhaps more. But don't forget this—two or three hours amount to nothing at the beginning of a twenty thousand miles race!"

"That's right, Mr. Avery," admitted Andy, his tired, drawn face breaking into a smile. "We are going to save much more time than that during the hop by refuelling in the air and not taking any time out for landing. On the other hand, however, our plane is really one of the slowest in the race. Some of the others can make 170 and 180 miles an hour."

"Sure, at full speed!" retorted the president. "Just as you can make 135 with everything opened up. You'll cut down your engines to save them. So will all the others! No, this race is going to be won by the plane that just trots along, fair weather or foul, setting the

proper course and sticking to it. Remember the old fable about the hare and the tortoise?"

"Sure," laughed the boy. "The race is not always to the swift."

"Sonny!" called Mr. Avery. The youngster was at his side in an instant. "You broadcast a message to the world that the 'Apex' has been slightly delayed but will fly over the starting line tomorrow morning without fail. Tell the officials of the race to be sure and stay at the field to check the 'Apex' in when she arrives."

The boy was gone in a flash.

CHAPTER VII

THE START OF THE GREAT RACE

Five-fifty o'clock on the morning of June 1. Every road leading from New York City and the eastern end of Long Island was jammed with cars. On the great expanse of dusty grass at Mineola eleven airplanes were lined up in a row, their motors ticking idly as their crews waited with tense nerves for the starting gun.

Monoplanes were there, both large and small. There were also biplanes with one, two, and three motors. The flags of the United States, Germany, Italy, France and Poland were painted on wings and fuselages. It was, in all truth, an international contest.

Yet the crowd was disappointed. They had expected to see the giant flying boat "Apex" circling over the field. Without Andy Lane it wasn't much of a race as far as they were concerned.

Five minutes to go! The loudspeakers fas-

tened to trees and telephone posts on all four sides of the great field boomed out another announcement. The roar of the crowd died to a whisper, then to silence. Except for the hollow, distorted voice of the announcer and the subdued popping of the idling motors, there was not a sound as the thousands of eager listeners strained their ears to catch every word.

"The flying boat 'Apex' has been sighted over Gloucester, Massachusetts, headed this way. The officials of this race have been in constant touch with Andy Lane by radio. He assures us that the 'Apex' will cross the starting line within two hours."

A tremendous cheer burst from the crowd. The next instant the starting gun was fired. A little man waved a checkered flag. From the far end of the line, a graceful monoplane forged ahead. She gained speed with astounding swiftness and was off, zooming and banking far over on her side as her pilot swung her nose towards the east and Europe. Another wave of the checkered flag and the next ship in line got underway. With the utmost speed one after another of the heavily laden planes took

the air, until nine tiny specks could be seen dwindling into nothing in the eastern sky.

The tenth, a cumbersome looking biplane, trundled awkwardly along the runway. Her pilot was doing his best to lift the immense load of ship, fuel and crew into the air. She skimmed lightly over the ground as she gained speed. Her wheels lifted a few inches, then dropped. They lifted again. Once more they sagged. As the huge pneumatic tires touched the ground the horrified watchers saw a little puff of dust come out from under her wheels. Suddenly she slewed completely around, her lower wing crumpled and she went over and over like a sheet of paper blown by the wind. In a moment all that was left of the big plane was a torn mass of fabric, wires and struts.

There was a clanging of bells and the field ambulance bounced across the turf at full speed. It seemed a year before it arrived at the wreck which, by some good fortune, had not caught fire. The white-coated attendants jumped out, placed three still figures on stretchers and carried them away to the hospital.

Another wave of the checkered flag. This

was not the only ship that would crash before the race was over. The eleventh plane must be sent off. And away it went, a beautiful monoplane with the flag of France painted upon sides and underwings.

This last plane, however, instead of turning east to follow the others, headed due west, pointing directly for the smoke pall on the skies that marked New York.

The watching crowd, amazed by this unexpected change of route, consulted their programs and newspaper clippings. Number 11, H. Brewster and his crew, of France! To some of the people came the recollection of an H. Brewster who had tried to reach the South Pole and who had been rescued by Andy Lane. To others, H. Brewster, flying the flag of France, meant nothing except that he was the only pilot to start his great journey by way of California and Japan rather than by the open Atlantic and Europe.

Then the crowd, almost to a man, sat down to wait. They would stay to see Andy Lane if they had to sit there all day. There was a whisper, "Andy Lane," which became a roar

when a little speck in the eastern sky grew to a familiar monoplane with three engines on its single wing, and a huge low-hung body without wheels.

Every one of the thousands of people there had seen pictures of the "Apex" and they recognised her at once. There was no question where their hearts were, for those on the ground yelled until their voices gave out, clapped their hands, and threw their hats into the air. From every automobile parked on the four sides of the field came a screech as its driver clamped his hand on the horn button and held it there.

The wonderful flying boat, the long rays of the sun being reflected from her glistening brown hull, nosed down in a slow, singing spiral until she was scarcely a hundred feet above the ground on the far end of the field.

The important little man with the checkered flag raced to his position at the long, white-washed line that marked the start of the race. Then all three of the mighty engines thundered into life and the "Apex" hurtled low across the full length of the airdrome. It flashed across the white line, the starter waved his flag. The

"Apex" had started on her way around the world, hard on the heels of the others.

With a mighty upward swoop her nose lifted into a zoom which took her back into safer altitudes. Then one side of the wing dropped while the other rose. For an instant she seemed to stand on her side as the blunt nose swung round to the west. Then she straightened up and began to grow smaller and smaller as she, too, followed the lone plane to the west instead of the nine which had all gone eastward.

A long sigh escaped from those thousands of people as though from a single throat. They had seen their young hero and his daring comrades start. Each of them hoped he would be in this spot when Andy Lane returned, leading all the rest.

Deep in his heart, even the man whose airplanes had outnumbered all the rest, cherished this same hope. Mr. Collins, who had seen three Collins airplanes take off and dash for the broad Atlantic Ocean, watched, with eyes more than a little wet, as the huge "Apex" became a tiny black dot in the sky. Though the success of that plane meant even greater suc-

cess for his business rival, it carried in its crew a frail, eager boy who meant more to his father than all the money in the world.

Mr. Collins turned away, his heart heavy, and began his walk across the field to Mr. Avery's office. The two would have breakfast together, two business rivals who had suddenly become warm friends.

CHAPTER VIII

TROUBLE

The experienced crew of the "Apex" had already settled down into the orderly routine which had on their last two great flights become the order of the day. Even though they were heading directly west, over hills, mountains and plains, where in a flying boat a sudden forced landing would be as certainly fatal as on the South Pole itself, it was only the newest member of the crew who felt any nervousness whatever.

To little Sonny, who stood at the door of his radio room, the calm of his friends was a marvellous thing. His pal, Andy, who was, after all, only five years older than himself, was quietly making an entry of the take-off in his log book.

"8:12 A.M., June 1st. Took official departure from starting line. Weather fair. Wind east, force ten miles. Wing engines turning 1700

revs. each. Center engine cut out. Air speed 90 m.p.h. Ground speed 100 m.p.h."

It was all perfectly as casual, thought Sonny, as though Andy had been writing up his diary in his study at home. Joe was at the wheel watching quietly while New York City swam past under the wing. He slouched back in his deep chair, scarcely moving the wheel or the rudder pedals as he kept the big plane on a level keel.

Dick was asleep in the berth beside Sonny's radio set. Scotty was also slumbering, somewhat noisily, on Sonny's berth. The pup had seemed completely happy ever since the "Apex" had taken the air in the pitch darkness of the Kennebec River several hours before.

Sam, with an air of complete contentment, was buckling on his safety belt for an inspection of the engines on the wing. Sonny followed him part way up the ladder leading to the hatchway. As the mechanic snapped his two sliding hooks to the rail leading along the cat-walk, the boy stuck his head and shoulders out into the wind and watched him.

First Sam went to the silent center engine, not seeming to mind the tornado-like wind at all. From a great open-mouthed bag slung around his shoulders, he took an end wrench and removed each of the spark plugs for cleaning, replacing them with glistening white plugs. Then, with another assortment of end and socket wrenches he tested and tightened every bolt and nut.

He produced a long-neck oil can and carefully oiled each moving part. Then he wiped the motor clean with a rag. He patted it here and tapped it there until he seemed perfectly satisfied.

Then he waved to Joe, who had been watching him through a rear view mirror in the control room. The pilot started the engine that Sam had just inspected and killed the left wing motor. The efficient mechanic then gave that engine the same loving care he had bestowed on the first. An inspection of the third motor followed and Sam swung down the ladder satisfied for a few hours at least that his pets were in perfect condition.

Sonny shivered as he thought of the bitter

cold that Sam must have endured as he went through this same performance every few hours when the "Apex" had been flying over the ice of the polar seas. He looked at the plump, cheerful mechanic with admiration. Andy had sure been lucky to find such a crew!

When the pair returned to the cabin, Sonny found Andy fast asleep in his own little room. Such a night as the pilot had been through! He had insisted that Joe should sleep all the way from Maine to Mineola so that he might be fresh to take over the wheel at the starting line. Then he, himself, after making a final inspection of the plane, had turned in. With a few hours' rest he would again be as fit as could be.

The utter lack of care and worry on the part of the crew had its effect on Sonny. He, too, began to feel that this gently rocking cabin was his real home. He settled down with a feeling of peace and security which he would not have believed possible on his first long flight.

"It's sure a tough break for us that Brewster headed west, too," commented Joe, as Sonny sat beside him enjoying the view. "I'll

bet my last dollar that he knew this was the way we were coming and decided that if he couldn't wreck our plane, the best thing to do was to fly on our course and try to keep an eye on us."

"What makes you think he knew the way we were coming?"

"Why, because any ordinary pilot on a land ship would have hopped across the Atlantic first. It's twice as hard coming back across the Atlantic as it is going over it. We'll both have to buck headwinds the whole way across. Don't you remember how many westward bound planes were lost before the 'Bremen' finally made it?"

Sonny nodded.

"Well, the only thing I can imagine," continued Joe, gloomily, "is that Brewster must have hired one of the employees in the Apex factory to learn our plans and tell him what we were going to do."

"Gee, I hope we lick him, even if every other flier in the race licks us!" declared Sonny, hotly.

"So do I. It will be a tough job, though. With the machine he's flying, he can make 125

miles an hour. The best we can do, steadily, is 100. We'll save some time by refuelling in the air, but we'll have to get all the breaks to make up for that extra 25 miles an hour."

"Where do we refuel next?"

"Over the Municipal Airport at St. Louis. Remember we took on a load there, on the fifteen day flight in the old 'Apex'?"

"Sure I do!" answered the boy promptly. "That's where Brewster's plane tried to dive on you and cut your tail off with his undercarriage." Joe said nothing, but the expression around his keen eyes was grim.

Sonny was thrilled at the beautiful scene that was passing under his eyes. The "Apex" was gradually gaining altitude and the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains were passing beneath the hull. Ahead they looked to be even higher than the plane itself, but as the great flying boat droned her way towards them they gradually flattened out and slipped easily under her keel with plenty of room to spare.

What a place for a landing, Sonny thought uneasily. It would be serious enough for a

land plane to try to find a level, cleared spot large enough to set her wheels upon, but a flying boat would crash the instant her keel touched the earth, even on a perfectly level flying field.

Beneath them now were nothing but rolling mountains, the waving tops of the trees which covered the slopes, and now and then a tiny patch, looking no larger than a postage stamp, of plowed up garden ground. Glistening ribbons of railroad tracks wound their way back and forth in an effort to avoid climbing the sides of the mountains. They seemed to take twenty miles to make ten, while the "Apex" cut straight across their meanderings at the rate of 100 miles an hour. The fastest train they passed over just crawled around the curves, its engine belching huge plumes of smoke and steam.

Suddenly Sonny, watching the scene beneath him with fascinated eyes, saw Joe listen intently, then reach over and snap on the switch of the third engine. He heard the hatchway open and saw Sam's feet scampering up the

ladder and out onto the wing. Sam had just come back from an inspection, so why did he hurry out again?

Just then, Andy, his eyes bleary from his sudden awakening, rushed into the control room and Sonny, worried now, made room for him at the dual control seat beside Joe.

For ten minutes they waited while Sam worked over the now silent engine. At last he returned to the cabin with a very serious face.

"Well, there's a jinx on us, sure as shooting!" he called. "That engine is one of those brought to us by Mr. Avery and the crankshaft is broken! It's out of the race for good!"

CHAPTER IX

A QUICK CHANGE

THERE was a stunned silence in the cabin. Everyone was too overwhelmed by this piece of ill-fortune to say a word. Then Andy spoke up crisply. He rapped out his orders.

"Sonny, snap into it! Go to the radio and tell Mr. Avery to send us another motor. We'll land in the Mississippi River at St. Louis. Let's see now," he hesitated a moment and thought deeply. "The fastest plane they have at the factory is a land ship, the 'Falcon.' It will make 180 miles an hour. Do this, Sonny. Tell him to send the motor and a couple of mechanics in the 'Falcon' and have them land at the airport at Anglum, Missouri.

"It's 15 or 20 miles outside the city. Then radio to one of the broadcasting stations—there's a big one owned by the evening newspaper—and see if they will have the fastest motor truck they can find waiting for us at the

field. It can rush the motor to us at full speed."

Sonny dashed to his instruments.

"The Missouri River flows almost directly past the St. Louis airport at Anglum," suggested Joe. "Why wouldn't it be a good idea to land there?"

"I'll tell you, Joe," replied Andy. "I remember that the levee at St. Louis is made of cobblestones. They won't hurt the hull of the plane because of the long steel skids that we had put on to protect us in case of a forced landing on the ice during the Polar flight.

"We can pull the 'Apex' right up on the levee. Then we can have a big automobile wrecking truck back right up to us and with the help of a derrick, jerk this motor off and hoist the new one on. We'll save more than enough time to make up for the distance we'll be from the landing field. You see, I'm not sure that we could do that on the banks of the Missouri. It might be all soft ground that a wrecking truck couldn't get over."

"Right you are!" agreed Joe promptly. "You may be young, but you've got a great

conk on your neck!'' That was great praise from the usually silent Joe.

''The motor will be on its way in half an hour,'' announced Sonny, returning to his seat. ''Mr. Avery says again not to worry about a few more hours at the start of a race around the world.''

''All right,'' said Sam. ''Come on, Dick, put on your harness and we'll get up there on the wing and get the engine ready for dismounting. We can take everything off it and drop the parts overboard just as we did in Maine. Then, as soon as we land, we'll be ready to unbolt the motor from its bed and we'll be ready for the new one. As soon as that is bolted on, we can try to take off with only two motors. Then we'll finish hooking this one up while we're in the air.''

The hilly country had now flattened out. They were leaving the rolling foothills behind as they plunged over Ohio and were heading for the level plains of Indiana. Sonny hammered away at the key of his radio set, perfecting all the details for a lightning-fast

change of motors. The "Falcon" had already left the Apex factory and was speeding westward at a speed almost double that of the "Apex." A fast motor truck was on the way to the airport and a wrecking car would back up to the levee the moment they landed.

At 11:30 Sonny listened to a St. Louis broadcasting station announce that Brewster's plane had landed at St. Louis and was even then filling up its gasoline and oil tanks. At five minutes of twelve, he heard that it had taken off once more for the west. Reports from the nine planes sweeping eastward began to filter in. One of them made a forced landing at Old Orchard Beach, Maine. Another reported by radio that it was having engine trouble and expected to land at Trepassey Bay. That would leave seven rivals heading eastward and Brewster now ahead of them. In all, there were eight now against them.

Half an hour before they sighted the smoke-haze over St. Louis, Sonny took the welcome news to Andy that the rescue plane had just arrived at Anglum and that the motor, accompanied by two expert mechanics, was being

raced over the smooth roads of St. Louis county, escorted by a couple of motorcycle policemen to give it right of way through the traffic.

"Boy, that's quick work!" said Joe, as Sonny returned to his radio. "We aren't so far behind Brewster at that! If these new motors will all stay with us, and our jinx will leave us, we'll catch up with him yet!"

The smooth brown wheat fields beneath them, cut into neat little squares and rectangles by the state highways, fled by under the wings, being gradually replaced by great, ugly, factory buildings. Blast furnaces and steel mills sent geysers of flames into the sky as the "Apex" thundered over the mill city of East St. Louis, Illinois. Acres of stockyards filled the air with a disagreeable smell which reached up even to the flying boat as she passed overhead.

Then, watching carefully for the best landing place, Andy cut the throttles and coasted down between two of the great bridges across the smooth, muddy waters of the Mississippi. These bridges were so close together that he almost scraped the keel of the "Apex" on the

hanging cables of the first of them as he shot for a landing. And when the plane at last hit the water he was almost beneath the massive masonry arches of the next one.

He jazzed his two remaining engines as he kicked hard on the right rudder pedal and turned the boat against the stream to head for a suitable landing place. A half dozen old-fashioned stern wheel steamboats were drawn up against the sloping levee, their slender smokestacks almost brushing against the elevated railroad tracks which ran between the levee and the city. Andy spotted an open space between two of them and drove the "Apex" carefully, but securely, up on the slimy cobblestones.

Already the levee was black with people, a long line of police having hard work to keep them back from the waterfront where they would get in the way of the aviators. Word had been spread by the broadcasting stations of this scheduled change of engines, and the people of St. Louis had swarmed to the river side to watch the exciting event.

Almost as soon as the flying boat had touched

the levee, a path was cleared by the police and a heavy red truck with a derrick at its rear dashed down the sloping hill, swung round and backed down until its hoist could reach the engine about which Sam and Dick still labored.

The last bolts which held the motor to its foundations were slipped out and the derrick hoisted it off the fragile wing as though it weighed no more than a tennis ball. Then, for the first time, the two mechanics stood up straight to get their breath. They looked around at the crowds and grinned. So far they had not wasted any unnecessary time.

"How about the refuelling ship that was due to meet us over the airport?" asked Sam.

"It's on the ground there now," answered Andy. "It will take off the minute we leave the water."

"That's good," approved Sam. "And here comes the motor."

With a wailing of sirens, six motorcycles popped their way through the crowds, followed by a fast truck. In the seat beside the driver were two mechanics who had worked for many years beside Sam and Dick in the motor test

room of the Apex factory. They smiled and yelled a greeting.

"Atta boy!" shouted Sam. "The best two men in the plant! Let's go!"

In an amazingly short time they had swung the derrick chains under the spare motor and had given the signal to hoist. Then the mechanics from the truck leaped aboard the "Apex," ran through the cabin and were on the wing by the time the engine had been lifted to its position an inch or two over the foundation.

There was no unnecessary conversation, for every man knew his job and did it without a word of command. Joe, Andy and Sonny stood helplessly in the open compartment watching the skilled men drive through the engine bolts and bolt the motor securely in place.

"Better dump out all but fifteen or twenty gallons of gas, Andy," panted Sam, as he labored with a huge end wrench. "Then we'll be light enough to take off with only two engines. There's a good wind and we shouldn't have much trouble."

Andy pulled the dump valves of all the tanks

but one. That tank, as he could see by the gauges, was more than three-fourths empty. Then Sam said,

"All right, you fellows, you can fly back to the factory. Dick and I will make the connections in the air. We can't wait here any longer."

Thirty or forty eager volunteers pushed the bow of the "Apex" back into the water. The two faithful engines were started. The factory mechanics went ashore. Sam and Dick went back down into the cabin.

"Well, let's be on our way!" sang Sam.

A mighty cheer went up from the crowd lining the levee as the "Apex" swung round into the wind and began to gather speed. Upriver, under first one and then another of the tremendous bridges she plunged before she even began to plane on the surface of the water.

Then, as she gained momentum, she began to just skim the surface. Without the third engine to help, however, she was loath to leave the water. At last Andy gently swung the wheel back and forth giving to the immense plane a slow rocking motion. She suddenly

started to skip over the surface in much the manner of a stone when hurled on a pond by a small boy.

Those in the cabin of the speeding plane held their breaths. They eyed the water as it rushed under the thin, planked hull, fearful that she might hit one of the many floating logs that were drifting south with the current. They knew that one of these heavy timbers would crush through the mahogany hull as through an egg shell, ending their trip instantly.

But at last, to their great relief, she shook herself free of the river and at once began to take altitude. The dumping of the gasoline had lightened the ship just enough so that she could leave the water and climb.

At two thousand feet they saw the refuelling plane which had, in great black letters on sides and wings, "Superior Gasoline and Oil Company." By the confident manner in which the crew of the tank plane drew into position for the filling, Andy knew that they had met this refuelling ship and her crew somewhere on one of their last great flights.

Without the slightest hesitation, without the

slightest false motion, the oil plane rose to her place just above and ahead of the "Apex." A long rope was dropped and Dick, in the open cockpit at the bow, caught it and pulled it hard. At the end of the rope was a thick, snake-like hose, fitted at the end with a spring nozzle. This Dick inserted in one of the filler pipes, pressed the lever, and the gasoline gushed through and into the tanks of the "Apex."

For ten minutes while both planes flew together on their westerly course, the precious fuel, fresh water and oil flowed through the hose. Then, as the smoke of St. Louis was left far behind and they passed over the rolling hills and the beautiful estates of St. Louis county, the hose was drawn back into the "Superior" and two baskets full of fresh foods were lowered. The second basket contained several kinds of candy, bottles of fresh milk, a roll of St. Louis newspapers, and three quarts of chocolate ice-cream! Sonny's brown eyes almost popped out of his head when he saw the ice-cream and candy.

"Andy," he said, "if your mother could see that can of ice-cream you couldn't convince her

that this was a dangerous flight. She just wouldn't believe that we could be sitting up here eating chocolate ice-cream as if we were in a rocking chair on your front porch!''

''Send her a radio and tell her so,'' laughed his pal, as he watched the refuelling plane swing away to return to the airport. ''Listen, Sam,'' he continued. ''You and Dick sit right down and eat your share of the cream. That will give you a few minutes of rest and then you can get to work connecting up that motor. Sonny will check and put away the fresh supplies. But watch yourself with that ice-cream! If you gain another pound, I'll strap a parachute on you and throw you overboard, the way we did Brewster six months ago!''

''Yes, you will!'' retorted Sam, dipping as deep in the can of ice-cream as his spoon would reach. ''Just you try it! You will walk many, many wet and weary miles back to Mineola if you do! Those engines will be calling 'Sam, Sam!' before this trip is over, and if Papa doesn't answer, they'll cry themselves to sleep. So treat me well, lads and lassies!'' Having finished that plateful, he filled his dish once

more, serenely ignoring the outraged roars from the rest of the crew.

Then, as the plane mounted steadily into the skies, passing over the wooded slopes and summits of the Ozark Mountains, Sam and Dick went back to work on the wing, getting the new motor in fit condition to do her part.

At last Sam straightened up into the warm blast of wind and signalled Andy to cut in the new engine. As the boy pulled the starting lever, there was a great bark from each of the cylinders, a puff of oily smoke from the exhaust stack and the motor settled down to an even, steady roar. Sam listened for a moment and made two or three tiny adjustments. Then, held only by his safety belt, he waved both hands in the air and danced a little jig on the slippery wing.

"Well," said Joe, as he relieved Andy at the control for his late afternoon trick at the wheel, "I hope that gets rid of our jinx. We're only about three hours behind schedule now and that isn't as bad as I expected. Not bad at all when you consider all the troubles we've been up against."

CHAPTER X

OFF FOR HONOLULU

It was almost exactly six o'clock when they sighted Kansas City sprawling on its many hills along the bluffs of the Missouri River. In ten minutes more they had left it far behind and were flying at an altitude of two thousand feet over the wheat-covered prairies of Kansas.

"Gee whiz!" said Sam, puzzled. "The sun is still way up in the sky and it's nearly seven o'clock."

"We've gained an hour on the sun," explained Andy. "We're now on Central time, pretty soon we'll strike Mountain time. That is still an hour earlier. After that, we gain another hour when we hit Pacific time. There's a spot in the Pacific Ocean where we jump a whole day."

"Well," said the disgusted Sam. "You set your clocks to suit yourself. I'll go by the time on the instrument board and stop worrying. I

can always tell when it's time to eat without looking at the clock. Something tells me now that I'm way behind in my eating. Watch the engines, Dick, I'm going to do some high, wide and handsome cooking. We all deserve it after the day we've just spent."

As the dusk closed in they sat down to a meal that would have done credit to the chef of New York's greatest hotel. In the midst of it, however, Sonny's eyes began to close and his chin suddenly dropped down on his chest.

"Poor kid," said Andy softly. "He's all in! He's been on the job ever since Mr. Avery's house burned down. Come to think of it, I don't believe he's had a wink of sleep since then!"

He lifted the slight figure of his little friend in his strong young arms and carried him tenderly to his berth in the radio room.

"You watch at the set," he said to Dick. "We shouldn't have forgotten to send the kid to bed when his watch was over!" A moment after he had seated himself at the instrument Dick called out:

"Brewster's just landed in Denver. Expects

to be off again in half an hour. Five planes have passed over St. Johns, Newfoundland, heading for Europe. Wood, of the Collins Company, is in the lead."

"Gee, Brewster is sure playing safe!" marvelled Andy. "He isn't taking any chance of overloading his plane with gas and seems to be taking just enough to last him twelve or thirteen hundred miles. Why, with that ship of his, he could have made New York to 'Frisco in a single hop!"

"Sure he could," agreed Joe, "but he would have taken the chance of cracking up in his take-off. He's wise to make shorter jumps and be sure of himself!"

"We have the system, all right," came from Sam, who had cleared up his dishes and was resting for a moment in the doorway. "Why on earth haven't any of the others tried this refuelling racket? You'd think after we've gone and proved that it is the safest and surest way of handling a big plane, they would all rush to do the same thing."

"Guess it costs too much," replied Andy. "This flight alone must be setting Mr. Sey-

more back nearly a quarter of a million dollars for fuel, ships, and crew. There are very few men who are sports enough to take on such a job."

"Right you are!" agreed Joe. "On our first hop, when we broke the endurance record, Mr. Seymore only used one plane. All he had then was the expense of that single ship and its crew, plus the cost of the fuel. Of course, he got a tremendous lot of business as a result of the widespread advertising. That makes him willing to stay with us this time on such a big scale."

"Well, we're lucky to have two such princes as Mr. Seymore and Mr. Avery back of us, that's all I have to say," stated Sam as he prepared to go out on the wing for his regular inspection of the engines.

"We'd better start to climb, from now on," suggested Andy, as he turned the controls over to Joe. "About midnight by our time, we'll pass over Denver and we'll have to have plenty of altitude to get over the Rocky Mountains. It might have been safer to have swung north to Cheyenne so we could have used the search-

lights and light beacons of the air mail routes to guide us, but we want to make up our lost time."

"You bet!" agreed Joe, briefly.

Instructing Sam, whose watch it was at the engines, to call him at midnight, Andy turned in. Completely worn out by the heavy work and the loss of sleep of the past few days, he fell into a deep and dreamless slumber as soon as his head hit the pillow.

When Sam shook him out at midnight, he hustled into the control room to find the "Apex" flying at 12,000 feet over a heaped-up mass of knife-edged mountains. The scene below was one of marvellous beauty, for the hills and valleys were bathed in the cold light of the moon, which cast an unearthly glow on everything.

What a place for a landing, thought the pilot grimly, as he took over the controls from the sleepy Joe. There wasn't a spot of water within sight, even at that altitude, big enough to drop the hull of the "Apex" in. There wouldn't be a chance in the world of landing without a complete wreck. There wouldn't be

enough left of the plane to make a respectable box of matches.

Before he knew it, they had passed over the invisible boundary line of Utah. For a while the scenery was less rugged. He flew over wide plateaus and valleys, but still there was no sight of a landing place.

Sam, who had now relieved Dick at the radio, came in to tell him that Brewster's plane had passed high over Reno, Nevada, at 1 o'clock, headed southwest on the last lap of his journey to San Francisco. Andy figured the mileages on the chart.

"Well, as near as I can figure it, we're due to fly over Reno about eight in the morning. He's gaining on us, Sam. We're about seven hours behind him now. He'll gain another half an hour before he gets to 'Frisco, but he'll probably be delayed at least a full hour there, getting himself ready for the big hop to Honolulu."

"Well, he's flying, all right," agreed Sam gravely. "I'll bet a hat, though, that he'll be a lot longer than an hour at 'Frisco. If we didn't have cat-walks out to the motors so that

I could baby them every couple of hours, I wouldn't want to jump out there into the Pacific without a lot of tuning up!"

"I hope he stays a week!" said Andy earnestly. The steady, swift flying of their enemy had begun to get on his nerves. Seven hours ahead. That meant seven hundred miles. A long handicap, indeed. Still, what was seven hundred miles in twenty-five thousand? He gritted his teeth and resisted an impulse to thrust forward those throttles and speed his own plane up to 135 miles an hour. That would cut down Brewster's lead in fast order. But it would be at the expense of many hours from the life of his motors.

At their present speed he could count on them to carry the plane completely around the world. If he sped them up there was no telling how long they would last. So he sat there, tooling the great ship through the dangerous night, not increasing his engine speed by a single revolution.

The arid deserts of Nevada swept by beneath his wings. It was a flat expanse of waste land, broken here and there by ranges of hills and

mountains. He believed that here he could get the "Apex" down, in an emergency. Of course, the skin friction of the sand against her swiftly moving keel would probably burn the planking off, but at least she wouldn't dash herself into a thousand pieces. As he passed mile after mile of waterless space, however, he wondered if they would be able to make their way to water before dying of thirst. He didn't think they could.

Joe came on duty just as the monotony of the moonlit scenery beneath them was beginning to make Andy sleepy. He had not yet caught up on his lost sleep, so he dived into his bed with tremendous relief.

It was broad daylight when he was next called. Joe had just passed over Reno and was heading down towards the Golden Gate. They were even higher than when he had gone to bed and before taking over the controls Andy was glad to slip into his fur coveralls.

The mountains here were the most rugged he had ever seen. Most of them were capped with snow and reached with their icy fingers even above the height at which the "Apex"

was flying. In the clear light of day it was easy to steer a course to avoid them, but Andy thanked his stars that there was no fog or low-lying clouds to hide their dangerous sides from his view.

Sonny was still asleep, with Scotty cuddled deep beneath the pillows beside him. None of the crew had wished to wake the tired lad, so they had fallen into the old routine of their previous flights, watch on, watch off, Sam and Andy in one shift, Joe and Dick in the other.

"Brewster arrived at 'Frisco at 3:25 this morning," announced Dick as he placed Andy's breakfast on the drop table directly in front of the wheel. "He made a good landing in the floodlights and he and his crew worked two and a half hours on his plane before they took off for Honolulu. They passed the Golden Gate at five minutes past six this morning."

"We should be there at eleven," answered Andy after studying his chart. "We'll leave there at eleven, too, for the refuelling plane will fly right on our course with us. We'll have made up two hours on him. Well, that helps!"

They were prompt to the minute. As they

coasted down between Bald Peak and Round Top, skimming low over the Oakland Mole, the hands of the clock on the instrument board showed exactly ten minutes to eleven. Above the Presidio Military Reserve, facing the beautiful Golden Gate, they saw a single airplane circling about. As they drew closer, it wheeled and flew towards them. In a moment they made out the familiar outlines of the tank plane, as usual with the name "Superior" on its sides in large black letters.

As the "Apex" thundered over the old Exposition Grounds, across the parade ground of the Presidio and headed straight over Mile Rocks into the open Pacific Ocean, the refuelling plane got into position and poured down its tremendous load of gas, oil, water and supplies. Then its crew waved a cordial farewell and turned back to the shore line which was just a dim, blue line astern.

"Well, it's Honolulu or bust!" grinned Andy as he came out of his cabin, carrying on a slip of paper a record of the new course. He passed the compass reading to Joe. "2200 miles to go, Old Top," he continued. "With

our usual luck when we're flying over water, we should be there by eight o'clock tomorrow morning."

"That's easy," replied Joe. "Boy, I'm sure relieved to see water under the keel of this old boat! Somehow I like to see a land ship fly over the ground and a seaplane over the briny deep. But at that I'd rather fly straight back to New York in this plane than to have as many miles of water under my wheels as Brewster has in front of him!"

CHAPTER XI

LAND HO!

"For the love of Mike, Andy, where are we?" Andy whirled around to see Sonny, his hair tousled and his brown eyes still clouded with sleep, standing in the doorway. He was holding Scotty tightly in his arms and gazing wildly out of the windows. He had gone to bed while they were half-way across the continent. When he awoke, he could see nothing but blue water everywhere. Where there had been rolling plains extending to the horizon on every side, he could see nothing now but white-capped seas.

"We're half an hour out of 'Frisco, lazybones," smiled Andy, giving him a hearty smack on the back.

Sonny's nearsighted eyes glanced at the clock. "Good-night! Have I slept clear through till noon?"

"You have that! I thought we'd have to come in and wake you up when we sighted

Honolulu. You and Scotty are the champion long distance sleepers of the 'Apex.' "

At half past five, New York time, the radio, which had been tuned in to a San Francisco broadcasting station, suddenly broke off a tea dance program to announce that Art Woods, American pilot of one of the Collins planes, and his crew had just landed at Le Bourget field, Paris, and that four other planes had been reported between Land's End, England, and Paris. Woods, the report continued, was even then filling his tanks and meant to go on to Belgrade within two hours.

"Man, man!" whistled Sam, "Here we've been doing all our worrying about our dear little friend Brewster, just as if he was the only flier in the race besides ourselves. As a matter of fact, there are several fliers going round the world the other way who aren't so dusty! I'll say they're not! Sonny, you'd better get that radio chain of yours to take to sitting up nights beginning right now. We need information about these other birds!"

"Why worry?" said the calm Joe. "We're toddling along just about as fast as we can

without wearing out our engines. We're going to keep on, too, without wasting any time. If Woods gains or loses a few hours I don't see what we are going to do about it except to go on doing what we are doing right now. If we're wasting any time, I'd like to know where it is. I'm not worrying about anybody except ourselves."

So saying, he turned the controls over to Andy and went to bed, where he fell asleep without any loss of time. But Sonny, feeling his honor as a radio operator at stake, went to his own cabin and turning on his generator to its fullest capacity, sent out the first of a long series of calls to his amateur friends all over the world.

The late afternoon and early evening passed quietly. The crew of the great plane changed watches on the appointed minute and everything went as smoothly as though they had been circling round and round the Mineola air field. There was not even a steamer or a sailing ship in sight to break the vast emptiness of the blue-green sea and horizon.

Just after midnight Sonny brought Andy a

report that Brewster had landed at Honolulu and expected to take off again at three o'clock in the morning. Two of the eastward bound fliers were missing. Of those who had landed in Paris, all but one had taken off and were already far on their way on the next leg of their flight. Observers along their route estimated that Woods should arrive in Belgrade about two o'clock in the morning.

"Well, we've lost a little more time somewhere," said Andy grimly. "It's a cinch the only way we can win this race is by plugging along steadily day after day while the others drop out because of engine trouble or lose more and more time between jumps. Before long, these fellows who haven't been able to overhaul their motors as they go along will have a lot of engine work to do. Then is when we will catch up for we are doing our repairs as we fly."

Early in the morning a tremendous squall blew up out of the southern sky and for thirty minutes it looked as though the race might end then and there for the "Apex." Joe, who was at the wheel, sent for Andy and the two pilots, well accustomed to flying together through

rough weather, pulled and strained at the heavy wheel and rudder until it seemed as though their arms and feet would drop off from sheer weariness.

The big plane plunged and tossed through the swirling clouds. They eased the "Apex" down until she just skimmed the surface of the leaping waves in hope that the air down there would be less bumpy. But when they had narrowly escaped being plunged into the sea three times within five minutes, they cut in all three engines and fought their way up to fifteen thousand feet.

Still there was no top to the storm clouds. They could see nothing out of the windows but gray, whirling fog as they flew through the howling gale. Sam sat at the radio set, one ear listening for signals, the other for any strange noises from his three motors. Dick slept soundly through the bumping, rocking, and plunging of the ship. Sonny, who had wakened when the storm first struck, lay in his berth with a white face, trying to sleep. But the strangeness of everything and the shrill scream of the wind through the wires and

struts kept him awake, until he finally rolled out of bed and took over his duty at the radio.

The storm ceased as suddenly as it had begun. They roared out of the tumbling clouds to find themselves in a clear sky with the "Apex" plowing along on a perfectly even keel. In the east the heavens were taking on a gorgeous pinkish tint, the first glow of the dawn. A few miles to their right a great passenger liner was steaming quietly through the long rollers, headed for Honolulu. Since it was not yet time for Andy's regular turn at the wheel he returned to the cabin to finish out his sleep. He stuck his head into the radio room for a moment.

"What are you doing up, Ivory-head?" he demanded. "Did that little sample of wind keep you awake?"

Sonny's face was still pale but he smiled bravely.

"What do you mean, 'sample'?"

"Say, if you had flown the 'Apex' when she was riding upside down over a volcano in the middle of a South Pole blizzard, you'd call almost any kind of a storm after that just a

sample! Joe and I have flown together through enough rough weather so that we pull and kick at the controls as though we were only one man at the wheel. We know the 'Apex' will stand almost anything the weather has to offer. So next time you feel her bump about a bit, just turn over on the other side and finish your nap."

"Well then, I might as well finish my nap now," laughed the boy a little sheepishly.

"Wait till we pass over Honolulu," suggested Andy. "That will be a sight worth seeing."

"Hey, Sam," roared Joe from the wheel. "Where's breakfast?"

"Coming, me lord," answered the cook promptly.

Just as the sun rose in a great blazing ball behind them, painting the blue Pacific with every color of the rainbow, the pilot received his breakfast tray while the rest of the crew, in jubilant spirits once more, sat down in the comfortable wicker chairs around the cozy table.

"We may be late," said Sam, spearing a

large slice of sizzling bacon on the end of his fork, "but I'll bet there isn't a plane in the race that has engines in as good shape as ours. Here we've made nearly five thousand miles, now, and they are ticking as sweetly as three sewing machines. You wait, boys and girls, our jinx has dropped overboard. We'll eat up the miles from now on and listen to the radio reports of the other ships dropping by the wayside!"

Suddenly there came a great shout from the pilot. "Land ho!"

CHAPTER XII

AN APPEAL FOR ASSISTANCE

All four of the loungers scrambled to the pilot's room to see for themselves. Far ahead of them on the horizon, were a series of little gray-blue spots. They looked exactly like clouds.

"There we are, Andy!" exclaimed Joe triumphantly. "I'll tell the world you're a bright little navigator. If that's Hawaii and not the Fiji Islands or some other outlandish spot, I'll buy you a dinner when we get back to New York!"

As Sonny dashed to his instruments to direct the refuelling plane to get under way, Sam, Andy and Dick went out into the open compartment at the bow to glory in the balmy air and to watch the islands draw nearer. Then Sonny joined them, having received word that the oil ship would take off in ten minutes and fly out to meet them.

Now it could be seen that the long string of dots on the skyline were a whole chain of islands.

"If we've hit the point I headed for," explained Andy, "the next to the last island on the right is Oahu. Honolulu is on the other side behind those mountains. The next island on the left is Molokai, where the famous leper colony is located.

"In a little while I hope we'll be able to see just the top of Mauna Loa, way over there to the left. It's on the island of Hawaii way to the south of us. I don't believe we'll see anything but the top of the mountain even though it is the biggest island of them all."

Then Andy went back to the wheel to take over the controls, as Joe's watch was now ended. He headed straight for Kaiwi Channel, which separates Oahu Island from Molokai, and swung to the right past Koko Head and Diamond Head to fly over the great breakwater that protects Honolulu Harbor. A dozen airplanes from the Army field roared into the air as the famous flying boat approached. These

planes cavorted around over the larger, slower "Apex" in a gesture of enthusiastic greeting.

The interested crew of the great plane gazed at the lovely tropical city nestled beneath the palms. They watched the great fleet of battleships, destroyers, submarines and supply vessels anchored in the bay. They envied Brewster his opportunity to land there.

Then Andy spotted the refuelling plane flying straight out to meet them so he turned the tail of his plane on Honolulu and the beautiful mountains behind it. Once more he headed straight out for the western horizon.

The Army airplanes accompanied the racing "Apex" a dozen miles out into the Pacific then, turning back, formed themselves into a great flying "V" and sped homewards. As they disappeared into the distance, they reminded Andy of a flock of wild geese.

"Get every last drop the tanks will hold, Sam," advised Joe, as he stood in the open cockpit and watched the mechanic hold the hose pipe from the "Superior" into the filler pipes. "We've got a real hop to make, this time, and

if we have to buck headwinds we'll be flying on the perspiration inside the gas tanks before we get to Japan!"

When the refuelling plane had gone all gathered in the pilot's cabin.

"Listen, gang," said Andy, his keen blue eyes darting from instrument board to the ocean ahead of him. "We've had four or five very strenuous days. We've all found that the beginning of a long hop is the hardest time of all. It takes us a little while to get settled down. Now we have a jump ahead of us to Yokohama, Japan, that's a real, long distance flight. We should get there about 6 o'clock tomorrow night.

"Now I wish all of you would stand your regular watches, but when you're off duty, for the love of Mike, either sleep or rest! Up to now, we've all been working through all of our shifts and half through the other fellow's watch, too. If we keep on that way, we'll be too tired to fly the last half of the race in proper shipshape fashion. Sonny, have you had any reports about the other fliers?"

"Yep, Andy. I got a report through the

Radio Relay League that Woods and three other fellows left Belgrade a little after three this morning and are due in Cairo, Egypt, early this afternoon."

"Gee, they are bunched together, aren't they? And making good time, I'll tell the world!" said Joe. "What about Brewster?"

"He left for Yokohama at three, too."

"For Yokohama?" exclaimed Andy in astonishment.

"Sure, why not?" asked Sonny.

"I didn't dream that he would take the chance of making such a long water jump. Why, that's nearly four hundred miles farther than from New York to Liverpool."

"What did you expect him to do?" asked the boy.

"I thought he'd jump down to Suva in the Fiji Islands. That's only 2700 miles, and for part of the way he would be near enough to small islands so that he could make a crash landing near them if he had engine trouble. Then I thought he would fly across the New Hebrides Islands, across Papua and up to the Philippines. He'd be over some kind of land

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most of the time. He must be worried about our plugging right along behind him. He'd never take the chance of flying straight across, otherwise."

"He'll certainly gain on us this hop," groaned Sam.

"You bet he will. But he hasn't made that overhaul that you've been expecting yet, and his engines must need it badly."

"I'll say so. I wouldn't want to be in his plane right now with nothing but a few thousand miles of deep ocean on every side of him."

So those on the "Apex" settled down to their orderly routine, catching up on their lost sleep whenever they came off watch. When they had slept enough, they read the newspapers and magazines which had been lowered down to them by the Honolulu refuelling plane, or just sat out in the open cockpit feeling very well satisfied with life as they faced the soft trade winds of the tropics.

That night was the most perfect that Andy had ever spent in the air. The sky was cloudless. The moon gave a silver sheen to the smooth ocean. The sky was studded with mil-

lions of stars and the Southern Cross shone like an immense glittering cluster of diamonds.

He couldn't make Joe, Dick and Sonny go to bed. They all crowded into the open cockpit and stayed there until long after midnight, filled with the joy of flying and the charm of these summer seas. Even after the orders Andy had given about getting as much sleep as possible, he, too, joined the others when Joe came in to take his turn at the wheel. The sea was so smooth he could have made an emergency landing as easily as on Long Island Sound. He found it hard to worry about anything, even the fact that Brewster was flying much faster than he had expected and was gaining a little time on every leg of the journey.

The next morning was just as beautiful as the night had been. Shortly after 9 o'clock, Sonny, who had been busy with the radio, came to Andy with his note book in his hand.

"Brewster landed in Yokohama at 9 o'clock. I just got the message. He's refuelling now and hopes to leave within a couple of hours. At 9:30 last night, three racing planes arrived at Basra, Mesopotamia. Woods left there an

hour and a half later. The other two are still there, making repairs to their planes. Woods arrived at Karichi, India, at 8 o'clock this morning. It's taken just an hour for those messages to trickle in from half way round the world. Not so bad for my chain of amateur friends, eh?"

"I should say not, kid! Great stuff!"

"Man, oh man, if Woods and Brewster aren't sure making good time!" lamented Sam, his round face very doleful.

"They are," agreed Andy. "We're about nine hours behind Brewster now, but he'll lose some time getting away from Yokohama even if everything goes well. We'll just have to keep on plugging along and hope for a lucky break."

At 1 o'clock that afternoon Sonny rushed out of his radio room and silently handed Andy a slip of paper. As the pilot took one hand off of the wheel to reach for the paper, he saw that the boy's fingers were trembling.

"S. O. S." the message read, "S. O. S. Steam Yacht 'Wanderer.' Latitude 49 degrees, 50 minutes north. Longitude 150 degrees, 2 min-

utes east. On fire, rapidly losing control. Fourteen passengers and crew. Come quickly. Jamison, Captain."

"Get Joe, quickly, Sonny!" snapped Andy. As Joe dashed out of his room and took over the controls, Andy hastened to his office to examine the charts and measure his distances. Then he rushed to the radio room.

"Have you heard any answers to the S. O. S., Sonny?" he demanded.

"Yes, three. One from the 'Empress of Siam,' a big mail liner. She is three hundred miles from the yacht. Can't get to her before fifteen hours. Two others are from freighters, each of them more than twelve hours away. Another S. O. S. came through just now asking someone to hurry. The captain says he can't last more than a few hours."

"That settles it. Tell him we'll be there in five hours."

Sonny's fingers vibrated at the sending key. Andy turned away and walked into the control room where the three other men waited for him with anxious faces.

"Change course, Joe. Head due north."

As the silent pilot swung the great plane hard over to the right, Andy said soberly, "Well, fellows, we've thrown away the race. But it can't be helped. The yacht is 450 miles out of our course, almost directly north of us. It will take us about five hours to get to her. Then, after we've picked her up, we'll have to taxi slowly on the water to try and meet the 'Empress of Siam' and let her take the people aboard. After that it will be from six to eight hours more before we can reach Yokohama."

"Everyone keep quiet while I think," said Sam suddenly. "I believe I have an idea. How many miles is the yacht from Yokohama, Andy?"

"Six or seven hundred miles. I'd have to measure it on the chart to make sure."

"Just a minute now. Give me a chance to do some figuring." Sam took an old envelope out of his pocket and jotted down many figures, added them up, subtracted, added again. Then he looked up, somewhat doubtfully. "Well, there's just one chance in a hundred that we might make it. It's worth trying anyway."

"What *are* you talking about?" said Andy, exasperated by this uncertainty.

"Here's the idea. If we dump out all but just enough gas to take us to Yokohama and all the extra provisions and odds and ends that we don't need, we might be able to lighten the ship enough to take off with all fourteen of their passengers and crew."

CHAPTER XIII

THE BLAZING YACHT

For a moment there was a silence. After giving up all hope of keeping on with the race, to have it revived again!

"We'll try it!" cried Andy. "If there's a single chance, it's worth the try." He glanced down at the Pacific, which was smooth as glass. "If the sea keeps as calm as this, I'll bet we can make it!" He slapped Joe on the back in his relief. "Here, I'll take the wheel. You go back with Dick and toss out everything we won't need before morning. Then give Sonny a list of things that we'll have to have replaced.

"The Superior Company has a branch office in Yokohama. We'll have their manager buy all the things and bring them to us when we land the passengers in the harbor. We won't need the refuelling plane, but we will need plenty of gas at the dock. The oil plane had better meet us, however, and show us where to

land. Sam, you climb up on the wings and get the engines ready to turn over every last revolution there is in them when it comes time to take off."

"They'll do it now, Andy," replied the mechanic. "But I'll check 'em over again just to make doubly sure."

"Good. Now, Sonny, get busy on the radio and keep in touch with Yokohama and the yacht. Also, if you have time, call your amateur friends and get a message through to Mr. Avery telling him what we are going to do."

The next few hours sped by on the wings of the wind. Every man in the crew was busy at his appointed tasks. Sam spent a full two hours out on the wing and when he returned told Andy that the motors were in as nearly perfect shape as any three engines could possibly be.

He had figured out exactly the number of gallons of gas and oil they could afford to dump before they landed and had pumped them into separate tanks so they could be emptied most easily. Joe and Dick had dropped everything overboard that would not be needed before

morning. Sonny had asked by radio to have the things replaced when they arrived at Yokohama.

The yacht's crew were still fighting the flames. Their captain reported that they were waging a steadily losing battle and begged the fliers to hasten as much as possible.

Andy had turned on all three engines now, and the "Apex" was plunging through the blue sky at all of her rated 135 miles an hour. At half-past four he called the others into the control room to see, far ahead on the horizon, a thin thread of smoke, which grew thicker and blacker as they hurtled towards it.

Sonny brought with him a final, despairing message from the burning vessel.

"Abandoning ship. Please hurry."

As the great flying boat ate up the miles of blue water that separated her from the "Wanderer," they could see, more and more clearly, the white hull of the graceful little ship, belching flame and smoke high into the blue skies. She was sinking fast under the weight of the water that was being poured into her by those fighting the fire. The crew of the "Apex"

knew they were arriving not one minute too soon, and their hearts pounded with excitement.

Those on the volcano-like decks were launching three small boats and as Andy cut his engines and began his slow glide to the water, he could see the passengers climbing frantically down the low white sides.

"Dump her, Sam!" he snapped.

From the bottom of the mahogany hull came a tremendous sheet of gasoline and oil which immediately turned into a cloud of fine spray and disappeared astern. In the next moment the keel slipped into the water for a perfect landing. On the water again for the first time since leaving St. Louis!

As the "Apex" lost headway and wallowed sluggishly in the long, smooth ground swells of the Pacific, the three boats turned toward the plane and rowed up to its big wing. There was a woman among the many passengers, also a girl and a small boy.

Scotty, who had been sitting out in the open cockpit watching everything with interest, began to growl and bark.

"Quiet, Scotty," commanded Andy. He

turned to Sam. "What in the world do you suppose he's barking for?"

"Doesn't like the looks of that girl, I suppose," answered Sam gloomily. "Neither do I. Can't stand girls! No, that isn't Scotty's trouble—there's a kitten on that first boat."

And so there was. A tiny black kitten, held snugly in the arms of the girl. As the life boat swung up to the hull of the flying boat, the kitten looked at the pup and spat at him, her tiny red mouth showing vividly against her coal black fur.

Three of the crew of the "Apex" at the doorway helped the boatloads of passengers climb into the cabins of the plane. They seemed to fill every nook and cranny. Fourteen of the rescued added to the five regular members of the crew certainly made a load. As Andy saw the crowd on his beloved plane, his heart sank. He would never be able to take off with such a load!

Hasty and informal introductions were made. Andy, as captain of the "Apex," received the captain of the yacht, the owner and his family, in the control room.

They were all pale and haggard from the strain of their few last hours. But the owner, Mr. Curtis, managed to smile at the youthful pilot.

"So you are the famous Andy Lane? We appreciate your coming all the way up here more than I can ever tell you! This is Mrs. Curtis, Sally, my daughter, and Robert, my son."

The boy and girl were gazing at Andy with eyes filled with excitement and admiration. They had never expected to see this famous young flier face to face. It was just like a book! Sally, pretty as a picture with her deep violet eyes and her curls of golden yellow, put down her kitten to shake hands with Andy. The kitten, its tail twice its normal size, immediately plunged through the crowd and leaped on Scotty's back.

With an agonised yelp, the pup dashed through the whole length of the flying boat's hull until, far in the stern, he managed to shake off the little spit-fire from his back. Then, with his tail between his legs, he scuttled forward once more and hid under Andy's desk. The outraged kitten was passed back, hand to hand,

to her owner, who held her tight to prevent another attack on Scotty.

"Listen, Mr. Curtis," said Andy when the laughter and excitement had died down enough for him to make himself heard. "We are very glad to have been able to pick you up. However, we would like, if possible, to get back into the race. Would any of you mind if we flew back to Yokohama?"

Mrs. Curtis became somewhat pale, but the girl and boy both shouted together:

"Oh, Daddy, please!"

"We'll be mighty glad to get back to Yokohama any way we can!" answered the yacht owner promptly.

"Good. Now would you mind asking your captain to place your men around the plane according to our mechanics' instructions? We'll have to even up the weight, or we'll never get out of the water. It's nice and warm, so the open cockpit out there will be the most pleasant place. I'd suggest you go out there yourself and take your family with you."

Mrs. Curtis refused flatly to be taken in the air. She had never been in an airplane in her

life, she said, and she would much rather not be on this one. If she had her way she would go right out in that little rowboat and wait for some steamship to come along and pick her up. After a great deal of coaxing, however, she at last went to the living-dining compartment and sat down in one of the wicker chairs as though she expected the worst.

When Sam saw her come in he, too, feared the worst! He had never known any good to come of women or girls riding in airplanes. In his opinion it wasn't at all the place for them. Still, Andy's orders were orders, so he made the best of it. He and Dick herded part of the yacht's crew into the passageway leading back to the tail. More of them were crowded together in the various cabins until the entire milling group was at last placed around to distribute the weight evenly, fore and aft. The only compartment in the whole ship that was not packed to overflowing was the control room. Here, except for Joe and Andy in their seats behind the wheel, nobody was allowed.

Sonny managed to rescue his chair at the radio set from the grasp of two burly seamen.

Then he put on his phones and prepared to send out an S. O. S. if he should feel the "Apex" falling during the take-off.

Scotty had not come out from his hiding place. There was too much excitement around the ordinarily peaceful and quiet plane to suit him. From all appearances he would stay in his haven until that terrible black kitten was taken off the ship.

Sam at last passed the word to Andy that all was ready. The pilot was surprised to see that only thirty minutes had passed since the keel of his plane had touched the water. It had seemed like hours!

Of the "Wanderer" little remained but a strip of white hull just above the water. Both masts and the single funnel had toppled overboard. Even as they gazed at her, they heard voices calling from all over the plane.

"Look at the yacht!"

The graceful bow suddenly began to rise out of the water until it pointed straight up to the sky. A boiling, billowing cloud of steam and smoke poured out of every porthole and companionway. As the water raced up her slant-

ing deck from the sinking stern, it, too, sent up huge masses of steam to join with the pall that was now hiding the sun.

For several seconds the little ship stood straight on end. Then she began to slip back into the ocean. Slowly at first, then faster and faster the "Wanderer" plunged, until suddenly she was no more. A mounting geyser of smoking water leaped into the air from the spot where she had disappeared. Then, as it settled back to the surface there popped into sight boxes, hatchcovers, deck chairs, and everything else that would float.

When Andy's fascinated eyes at last left the scene, he saw that the girl in the bow was crying. Her father, too, was greatly moved. The boy, however, was still staring, wide-eyed, at the wreckage of the beautiful little steamer.

CHAPTER XIV

ANDY IS EMBARRASSED

Andy pulled the wheel hard back against his chest and threw all three throttles full on. The heavily laden "Apex" moved ahead slowly, sluggishly, cutting through the water deeply, as though reluctant to take the air. For nearly two miles she wallowed, rising and falling with the great smooth rollers before she gathered sufficient speed to plane along the surface. Then came the most dangerous time of all.

When she had nearly reached her actual flying speed she commenced to jump from the top of one wave to the next. Each time she hit the walls of water at the crest of the waves, the impact sent a jar through the entire fabric of the plane that threatened to tear her to pieces. Each successive shock slowed her down just enough to prevent her getting into the air. Crash! crash! Every plank in her mahogany hull groaned in protest. Great sheets of spray

were tossed high on either side as the V-shaped hull smashed up against the oncoming waves.

Andy, his jaws clamped hard together, doubted if she would last through three more minutes of such punishment. He'd have to cut the gas and wait for a steamship to pick them up.

Then the "Apex" just skimmed the top of a wave, scarcely touching its crest with her ski-shod hull. As the next roller approached at lightning speed, Andy, out of the corner of his eye, saw Joe grip the wheel to give him assistance. Together the two men pulled hard back and once again the roaring plane eased over the wave with hardly an inch to spare. Both pilots, working as if with a single brain, eased the wheel forward a trifle to gain speed, pulled back again to jump over the next one, then Joe dropped his hands from the dual control.

They were off! The "Apex" had survived the greatest test they had yet given her! Andy's heart warmed toward the magnificent plane and the three trustworthy engines that had served him so well. With such a ship, and such a

crew he would fly anywhere! Nothing could stop him!

Inch by inch, foot by foot, he pulled her up to higher altitudes until the pointer on the altimeter quivered at 1000 feet. Then he levelled out, content to hold her as she was and not risk undue strain on the engines by striving for greater height.

He saw Sonny working his way through the throng of passengers. "Any word for Yokohama?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Andy. "Tell the branch office of the oil company that we will arrive in the harbor shortly after midnight. You'd better make a report to the Apex factory, too. Then when you've done all that, see if you can get any news of the other racing planes."

As Andy turned again to his wheel, he, who had faced the perils of the polar ice, the North Atlantic and the South Pacific oceans without a tremor, felt himself blushing to the roots of his hair. In the front cockpit Sally Curtis was looking back at him and clapping her hands with applause of his fine take-off. He became angry at himself for his silly blushing and

turned his eyes away from the girl. He would be glad when she and all the rest of the rescued passengers were safely on the docks of Yokohama! He would then be able to settle down into the routine of racing.

Darkness fell upon the speeding plane as suddenly as though someone had thrown a black curtain over the face of the sun. The cabin lights were turned on. The nineteen people aboard were hungry, so Sam, toiling as never before, managed to prepare a supper of bacon, eggs, bread and butter, and coffee. Dick and Joe served it to the crowded passengers.

Scotty smelled the hot food and could stay in his hiding place no longer. He squirmed out into Joe's seat where he sat up beside Andy, looked through the windshield at the black kitten in Sally's lap, and growled at regular intervals.

A flickering light was seen at last far ahead in the darkness. Then another and another stretching away on the port bow.

"There's Japan!" cried Andy to Joe, who had resumed his seat beside the pilot after taking the pup into his lap. "That's Cape Inube.

It won't be long now, before we'll swing around Nojimazaki on the southern tip of the Cape. We'll head north for the City itself. I don't dare cut straight across the Cape with a load like this. If we should have to come down on land, good-night! Better to stay over water till we unload this gang then we can do what we please."

"Here's some news from the other racers, Andy." Sonny had come in with his notes. "Brewster left Yokohama this morning about ten o'clock. He stayed there an hour. This afternoon he was reported by a steamer which had seen him flying high over the Eastern Sea. At the rate he is going they say he'll get to Hong Kong about two in the morning."

"Wow!" exclaimed Andy. "We're about 1500 miles behind him now and he's going like a streak of greased lightning. Any news of the others?"

"Woods and one other flier arrived at Bombay, India, at 2:15 this afternoon and took off at 3:30. I haven't any later news."

"Where are all the others, I wonder?"

"They're strung out all the way between

Bombay and New York!" laughed Sonny. "One's at Cairo, another crashed in the Balkans, two are in Paris trying to fix their motors and one has just been pulled out of the English Channel. One has disappeared between Trepassey Bay, Newfoundland, and Land's End, England."

"Well, they're dropping out one by one," mused the pilot, "while we're mooching along. All we'll have to do is to keep moving and let time and distance take care of the others. We can't afford to waste much more time, though, or Brewster will be looking at the field of Mineola while we are still flying over the Mediterranean. To say nothing of Woods and that other bird who are just burning up the miles!"

As Andy saw the last lighthouse on the Cape pass his starboard beam, he put the wheel hard over and banked the "Apex" for the last reach up the great bay which leads to Yokohama. Just then Mr. Curtis came through the passageway and stood beside the two pilots.

"Mr. Lane," he said, and his voice trembled with emotion, "I've been following the reports on the radio of the Round the World Race ever

since it started. I realise perfectly what it has cost you in time and wear on your plane to come and pick us up. We'll hurry ashore now without any unnecessary farewells. There's just one thing I wish to tell you. We live in Philadelphia and will start for home on the first steamer that leaves port. I want you to come and visit us as soon as you can when you get back to New York. If now, or at any time in the future, there is anything I can do in the way of financial help for any of your plans, I wish you would let me know at once!"

"Gee, that's mighty nice of you, Mr. Curtis!" said the boy, embarrassed by the other's gratitude. "I'll be very glad to spend a week-end with you when I get home."

"Fine! I wish you and your crew the best of luck in the race!" And the millionaire turned away.

They passed the lights of Yokosuka almost under their left wing. Sinagawa was in the distance on the same side. Then the lights of the great seaport itself were reflected high into the sky. Several searchlights were swinging their long white beams back and forth to direct

the rescue plane to the landing place. As the "Apex" finally swung round in a great circle over the harbor the crew of the plane looked down on Yokohama in wonder.

The great Bund, or waterfront, was ablaze with electric lights and paper lanterns. Thousands of people who had learned of the expected arrival of the flying boat with her cargo of rescued passengers, lined the water's edge. The harbor was brightly lighted by the searchlights of a dozen anchored warships and the river seemed filled to the banks with freight and passenger steamers. Thousands of junks, unwieldy and awkward-looking, were sailing or being rowed back and forth across the crowded roadstead.

High over the breakwater was an airplane, clearly outlined in the dazzling whiteness of four great searchlights. As the "Apex" flashed on her wing lights, the strange plane swung toward her. On the side Andy read the welcome word "Superior."

The pilot of the other plane rocked his wings as a signal for Andy to follow and glided down toward the one spot in the whole bay

which had been cleared of ships. He flew for a few feet above the surface, then rose again, for he had a land plane and could not alight in the harbor. Andy followed him down to a slow, cautious landing, which, under the concentrated beams of the searchlights was as easy to make as a descent in broad daylight.

Then the lights swung away from the "Apex" and shone on a great pier on which were painted the words, "Superior Gasoline and Oil Company." A long, black tank steamer had been warped away from the end of the wharf so that the "Apex" might have plenty of room for her wide wing. When Andy cut out all but his center engine and began to taxi carefully toward the pier, he heard for the first time the tremendous bedlam that was greeting him.

From thousands and thousands of people who swarmed like ants over every available inch of adjacent wharf space, and from the passengers and crews of ships anchored in the harbor rose a steady chorus of cheers. In spite of the hour of midnight, most of the steamers in the harbor were blowing blast after blast upon their whistles.

On the oil company's pier all was quiet efficiency. A rope had been stretched a hundred feet away from the landing, behind which stood a horde of motion picture photographers and reporters. These were clearly dismayed at not being permitted to approach more closely the world-famous flying boat. An eerie light was cast over everything by the searchlights from the ships, the electric lights on the pier and the constantly exploding flashlight powders set off by the photographers.

A small group of quiet men stood by the edge of the landing, waiting and ready to fend off the frail wing of the "Apex" from the rough edges of the wharf and to help the passengers ashore. A group of coolies, dressed, as Sam later put it, in their "nighties," stood guard over a huge pile of supplies. Another group held a hose pipe leading from many drums of gasoline and oil stacked on the pier.

Andy cut out the last motor and the "Apex" slid silently to the pier. Her blunt bow was instantly seized by some of the men and Andy, pale and tired after his long, anxious stretch at the wheel, eased himself out of his seat. Sud-

denly two arms embraced him and a warm kiss was planted on his cheek.

"Hey, quit it!" he yelled, thinking Sam was teasing him. He turned quickly to fend off any further attacks, then felt his ears grow red with confusion. Sally Curtis was just disappearing through the passageway, her thin white dress fluttering in the breeze. She reappeared in the open cockpit, laughed, waved her hand and allowed herself to be assisted ashore.

As the rescued party filed ashore, Andy heard a teasing voice from behind his back.

"Well, did 'um 'ittle boy det a dreat big kiss from his 'ittle friend? And did he kiss her back?"

"I did not kiss her!" Andy replied hotly.

"Oh, tut, tut, I saw you!"

Andy, furious, started to make some cutting reply, then suddenly realised that he was being joshed, so checked himself and ducked through the companionway to oversee the taking on of supplies. The arrangements made by the efficient Yokohama manager of the oil company were letter perfect. He stepped up to Andy calm and business-like.

"Congratulations, Lane. If you've lost the race, you may be proud of your reason for losing it. Here is every item you ordered by radio. Is there anything else you need?"

"Nothing at all, thanks," replied Andy watching the line of coolies who had already formed an endless chain and were passing the boxes and bags rapidly into the cockpit. Sam was standing by the filler tank inserting the hose which had been passed down from the dock. In a moment the tanks would be filling with fuel, oil, and water. Andy turned to the manager.

"You've done wonders and I'm a thousand times obliged to you."

"Tickled pink to have a share in the race," laughed the friendly manager. "Now these reporters want to talk to you. How about it?"

"Good gracious, no!" replied Andy. "The way those fellows are passing the supplies we'll be ready to leave in ten minutes. We'll stow everything away when we get into the air. You tell the reporters anything you like. I'm going on board again. Once more, a thousand thanks."

Everything aboard was in orderly confusion. As the supplies were stacked into the cockpit by the coolies, Dick, Joe and Sonny rushed them back into the living compartment where they could be sorted out and stored away when the crew had more time to spare. The big pile of stuff on the wharf was disappearing with astonishing speed. The three men, now joined by Andy, had hard going to keep the heap in the cockpit from overflowing. At last the wharf was clear. Sam signalled that the tanks were filled. Andy took the wheel while Joe stood by in the bow directing the shore hands in turning the plane to head out into the harbor.

Then Andy pulled the starting levers and the three faithful motors responded with promptness. The "Apex," riding easily now under her accustomed load, nosed out into the crowded harbor until Andy found a cleared straightaway. Then he jammed the throttles full on, pulled the wheel hard back and after a run of less than a mile, the famous flying boat was again roaring up into the dark sky, headed after the rival who was leading her in the race by so great a margin.

CHAPTER XV

ACROSS THE CHINA SEA

"Oh, Sister Susie, doesn't it feel good to have enough room to waggle your ears in!" exclaimed Sam coming into the pilot's dark room as the ship hurtled southward through the night.

"Waggle your chin, you mean!" retorted Andy.

"Oh, oh, is he still fretty 'cause I saw him with his pretty girl?" taunted the irrepressible mechanic. "Well, never mind, Andy. You're a sailor of the air, now, and you're supposed to have a girl in every air-port!"

"Get out of here, Fatty!" yelled Andy. "Go and cook yourself a midnight supper or something. We have work to do!"

"That's a good idea," replied the other. "This excitement keeps me awake. It's nearly two o'clock now and I haven't had anything to

eat since dinner. Who'd like a nice, hot little snack?"

"Not I," answered Joe rising from his seat beside Andy. "It's my time for bunk fatigue and all the nice, hot snacks in the world aren't going to keep my pillows from being warmed. Right now, too!"

"Well, if you'll be good," said Andy, "you can cook me whatever you're going to eat yourself. I have four more hours on duty and some food will pep me up."

"Fine!" said Sam. "I'll see what the others want."

In half an hour he came back with a tray and sat down beside Andy to keep him company while they ate.

"Poor little Sonny's all tuckered out," he smiled. "I gave him a bowl of hot cocoa as big as a wash tub and made him hit the hay. Dick's on watch at the radio." They ate their steak sandwiches and sipped their hot coffee with great relish as Andy steered the steady plane on her southwesterly course toward Hong Kong.

"By the way, Andy, there were supposed to

be judges at Yokohama to check us for having touched there. Did you see them?"

"No!" exclaimed the boy in sudden consternation. "I wonder if they were at the pier? We might not have been checked in at all. If that's so we might just as well start right home again."

"Let's get Dick to send them a radio and ask them if everything was in order," and Sam disappeared hurriedly into the radio room. In half an hour Dick came out and told them that the committee had indeed been at the pier, that all the rules had been complied with and that they congratulated the "Apex" upon their unselfishness in turning away from the race to go to the aid of the burning yacht. A few minutes later Dick came to the pilot's room once more.

"Sonny's radio friends have sent this message," he said. " 'Brewster and his crew arrived Hong Kong at 2 P.M. Having some engine trouble. All working on engine under strong police guard. Cannot estimate when they will get away.' "

"Oh, boy, what did I tell you?" shouted Sam jubilantly. "One after another these fast fly-

ing babies are going to be held up with engine trouble. Wait and see!"

"Well, at the rate they're going, they can afford a few hours on the ground," said Andy. He fell silent for a few minutes, thinking hard. Suddenly he said:

"Sam, you flew this plane on the South Pole hop. Take the wheel a second while I figure out something."

Sam, astonished, took over the controls and Andy dashed into his office to study his charts. In ten minutes he came out again, rushed into the radio room and snapped:

"Dick, send a message right away to the 'Superior' office at Yokohama. Use as little power as you can to reach them so your waves won't reach Hong Kong. Tell them to cable their Hong Kong office to keep the refuelling plane on the ground. Then to cable to Singapore to have their tank plane meet us at Saignon, in French Indo-China. If they start before morning, they will get there well ahead of us. We'll refuel there and take some short cuts that will cut down Brewster's lead. Step on the key, Dick, and rap it out!"

As Dick twirled his dials, Andy went back to the control room and took the wheel once more.

"Listen, Sam. Brewster will probably follow the route we planned to take. He'll hop the 1400 miles to Singapore, next. We're going to cut out the Hong Kong stop and jump to Saignon. It's only 900 miles farther than Hong Kong. A little over 2400 miles from here. It's a cinch for us and would be a cinch for Brewster except for the fact that he has a land plane and most of it is a water jump. That's why he's playing it safe. He might, possibly, hop from Hong Kong across the Malay Peninsula and then up to Rangoon. But no matter what route he plans, I'll bet we'll make up nearly all our lost time."

"Well, all of those places sound like the names of patent medicines to me. I have to sneeze when I pronounce them. From where I sit, it all looks like either land or water. If you're going to take chances the only thing I care about is that you are taking them in warm weather. This baby sure hates the cold. I have a sinking spell every time I think of the South Pole! Brrrrr!"

"Well, it's a cinch you'll be warm enough for the next few thousand miles," laughed the pilot.

"What time are we due at this Saignon place?" asked the mechanic as he rose to make another inspection of the engines.

"It's about 2500 miles in a straight shot. We're lucky tonight. There's a wind behind us to help us along. We'll make it in twenty-four hours."

"Fair enough. I'll go up and kiss the engines good-night."

Just then Dick came in all excitement.

"Boy howdy! That Woods bird is sure hopping! I have a message here from one of Sonny's friends saying that he left Bombay this afternoon at 3:30 and flew clean across India to Calcutta! He got there at midnight."

"That Collins engine of his must be a peach," admitted Sam who had lingered in the doorway to hear the news.

"It is," agreed Andy. The outlook for the "Apex" did not seem any too good!

Toward morning the temperature began to rise both in the cabins and in the outside air.

The sun rose in a blazing ball of white heat and by mid-morning the crew of the "Apex" were almost gasping for breath. Every window in the cabins was opened except those in the windshields in front of the pilots.

Even with this gale of wind sweeping the plane from stem to stern the air was stifling. To add to their discomfort, the crew had to wear earphones and chest mouthpieces, for with the opening of the windows the roaring of the powerful motors nearly deafened them. A telephone line ran to every nook and corner of the flying boat with jacks everywhere within convenient reach. As the men went about in the course of their duties, they plugged in their phones in the nearest jack and were thus able to hear anything that was said anywhere in the plane.

As the day wore on the heat increased. At last Andy gave the order to climb. Not until they had reached the height of fifteen thousand feet did the moist, humid air become even bearable. Those who were not on duty tried to sleep in their berths but soon gave it up and

went out into the open cockpit where Scotty had long since established himself. There they all sat trying to forget the heat.

Dusk fell, but they had made many miles to the southward during the day and the darkness brought little cool air with it. They still kept their altitude, for every time that Andy nosed down the heat waves would meet them like the blast from a hot oven.

Just before midnight they saw a number of scattered, twinkling lights on their starboard side.

"There's the coast of French Indo-China," said Andy. "We'll hit Saignon in about an hour and a half."

Those in the open cockpit roused by his voice in their earphones looked toward the lights with feeble interest.

"How about it, Sam?" jeered Andy. "Do you wish we were back at the South Pole?"

"Can't say as I do," replied the plump, perspiring mechanic. "But I do think that I could stand a few hours of flying over Newfoundland!"

"You're never satisfied," laughed the pilot.

"You want heat. I bring it to you. Now you want the cold. Well, wait a few days and I'll show you what the wind blowing down from Greenland feels like."

"Here's a report from Brewster," announced Dick passing Andy a slip of paper. It was from one of Sonny's unknown comrades of the air.

"Brewster left Hong Kong 6 P.M. Expects to arrive Penang in 12 hours."

"Suffering cats!" exclaimed Andy putting down the paper. "He's changed his route, too! Joe, take the wheel. I want to do some figuring."

As Joe took over the controls Andy went to his room and worked long with his dividers, compass and slide rule. At last he came out smiling with joy.

"Well, gang, that delay of four hours tuning his motors at Hong Kong, together with our straight jump down here instead of landing there, has almost cost Brewster his lead. As nearly as I can figure it, we'll have the lead on him before he leaves Penang. We shouldn't be delayed a minute at Saignon and if Sam will

be sure to fill the tanks to the brim, we'll jump straight over the Malay Peninsula just to the north of Penang.

"We'll save a few more miles by doing that. Then we'll shoot straight for Colombo, Ceylon. Unless Brewster is more desperate than I think, he won't risk the 1300 miles water jump to Colombo but will follow the coast line of the Malay Peninsula north to Rangoon and then hop straight across India as Woods did."

"Why didn't he cut across from Hong Kong to Calcutta," asked Dick.

"Too dangerous. Nothing but jungles and swamps most of the way. If he had to land, he'd be just as badly off as if he dropped in the drink!"

In spite of the darkness, the heat was becoming more and more sultry. But the crew of the "Apex" had come to life. The excitement of the race had driven all thoughts of heat out of their heads.

"For the love of Mike!" exclaimed Andy suddenly. "What has happened to the barometer? The bottom seems to have dropped out of it!" He leaned forward and tapped the

glass dial covering the instrument. "No, sir, it's all right, I guess, but if it is, we'd better prepare for a blow!"

At that moment Dick came out of the radio room.

"Andy, the air around here must be charged with electricity. The static has been getting worse all evening. Now I can't hear a thing except a roaring and a crackling. The radio is through for a while until it clears up."

Andy and Joe, the two most experienced fliers in the plane, exchanged meaning glances. The barometer dropping at the same time that the static was increasing certainly meant a storm!

"Golly, I hope it doesn't hit us before we reach the refuelling plane after Saignon!" exclaimed Andy. "We'll sure be out of luck for a long jump if we don't get some gas. We could make Rangoon, but I wouldn't dare shoot straight across the Bay of Bengal."

The air felt more and more unpleasant. The pointer of the barometer sagged worse than ever. Way off in the southern skies there was the incessant flicker of heat lightning. The

stars still shone brightly overhead but they had taken on a coppery glint.

Andy's hand crept to the switches and he cut in the center engine. Then he advanced the throttles of the others. The steady drone of the motors rose in pitch until they became a high-pitched snarl. The air speed indicator crept up from 100 miles an hour to 115, 125, then 135. The pilot glanced at the altimeter. They were flying now at 12,500 feet. He nosed the blunt bow down a trifle. The wind began to whistle through wires and struts. The air speed indicator showed 140, then 150 miles an hour.

Sam had disappeared. Andy looked through the rear view mirror. In the blackness he could see the shooting flames from the exhaust stacks. Then he saw another light, a brilliant spot of white, spotted first on one motor, then on another. Good old Sam! Looking after his pets, getting them ready for whatever might come!

CHAPTER XVI

THE TYPHOON

Even as the anxious crew of the fast flying "Apex" saw the straight beam of a powerful searchlight far ahead in the distance, the stars on the horizon to their left were suddenly blotted out. The clouds were approaching fast, for as Andy glanced in that direction, more and more stars were washed out into blackness as if by the inky brush of some giant painter.

The searchlight was closer now. Another and another appeared ahead of them until there were six of these gigantic white beams pointing upward at the same time.

Joe, quiet and efficient, sat down in the other pilot's seat and prepared to add his weight to the wheel if it became necessary. Andy measured the speed of the oncoming darkness against his distance from the searchlights.

"It's about an even break, Joe," he said. "That's Saignon, all right. If the oil plane is

in the air and can drop her load before the storm breaks, we're all right."

"Maybe!" remarked Joe. "Looks to me as if the storm was winning."

Andy pushed the nose of the boat further down. The big plane quivered and groaned under the unaccustomed speed as the pointer of the altimeter passed the 1500 mark. At 1000 feet Andy levelled out. If the refuelling plane were in the air this would be the altitude at which they would meet. The onrushing blackness in the skies was almost overhead, now, but the plane was still flying as steadily as a rock and the air was still breathless with the heat.

At last they had almost reached the searchlights. By a glistening reflection at their base, Andy could see that the great beams were coming up from several ships in the harbor. From one of the ships came the endless flashing of a small electric light. He watched it carefully for a moment, then called:

"Sonny, someone's signalling to us in code. Come here and take the message."

While the boy watched the blinking light Andy's keen eyes searched the skies for the oil

plane. At last he saw it clearly outlined in the combined beams of two searchlights. He shifted his course to meet it as Sam and Dick raced for the open cockpit.

"The signal is from a French cruiser," came Sonny's excited voice. "She says you had better come down. There's a terrible typhoon going to strike us in about five minutes. It has already sunk a lot of ships and is due to sweep straight across the Bay of Bengal."

"Shut all the windows, Sonny!" snapped Andy, wasting no time. "Put on a parachute pack and pass them out to the rest of the boys. Fasten everything movable. Make it snappy!"

The refuelling plane was now overhead. It was an open biplane with a crew of two men. Both planes were now in a light as bright as daylight. Andy could even see the doped patches on the grease-streaked linen fabric of the oil plane's fuselage. As the man in the rear cockpit kept the thick gas pipe taut the pilot looked over the edge. Andy found himself looking straight into the ungoggled eyes of a man pale with fear. As the oil pilot saw Andy looking at him he motioned downwards

as though he were trying to persuade the boy to land. Andy smiled and waved but pointed forward decisively.

At that instant there was a moan of the wind which rapidly rose to a shriek. Andy felt the left wing of his plane begin to rise with a mighty surge. Then Joe's strong brown hands gripped the other wheel and the two pilots, with the full strength of their powerful muscles, pushed down on the controls. For a second it seemed as thought all their weight would do no good, as the wing still rose. The bow of the "Apex" lifted and threatened to bury itself in the frail bottom of the fuel plane.

Then the upper plane caught the full force of the blast. Andy saw it rear upwards like a frightened colt. Then it vanished, just as everything disappeared from sight. The entire sky, the lights of the city beneath, even the powerful white beams of the searchlights disappeared instantly into a dark curtain of blackness. The storm had struck them.

In desperation Andy and Joe struggled at the bucking wheels to keep the heavy plane on an even keel. A horrible fear clutched at

Andy's heart that Sam and Dick had been tossed out of the open cockpit when that first terrific gust had hit them. But after a few moments that seemed years, Sam's round face appeared in the passageway door, followed by the somewhat paler face of his comrade.

"What are you trying to do?" came the mechanic's cheerful voice. They could hardly hear him through the whooping and shrieking of the wind. "Are you babies just doing a few loops or are you trying to get rid of me? I think you'd better belong to me, Scotty; I'm the only one who appreciates you!"

As Sam stepped into the thin beam of light entering the darkness of the control room from the brightly lighted after cabins, Andy saw that he was carrying Scotty. A frightened, bedraggled Scotty, not yet recovered from the first scare he had ever received in the air.

"I just caught him by the hair as he started to go overboard!" explained Sam. "Here, Dick, put him in Sonny's bed."

"How much gas did we get, Sam, before the wind blew the 'Superior' away?"

"According to the gauges, about half a load,

maybe a little more. Nice little blow we're having, isn't it?"

"Fair enough. You'd better stand by. There's no place to land now so we've got to keep going. We might as well go straight ahead as anywhere else. If we have to come down, I'd just as soon be a few miles from Colombo as a few miles from here."

The usually steady "Apex" swung in the gale like a rowboat in a storm on the open Atlantic. At last the pilots gave up all efforts to keep her absolutely steady. They allowed her to rise and fall with the wind, attempting only to keep her from turning completely over on her back. The entire fabric of the plane vibrated, squeaked and groaned as the clutching fingers of that mighty wind clawed at every inch of her wing and hull.

Andy knew that if he could see some landmark beneath him he would find that the "Apex" was being whirled along at the mercy of the wind. When he had first sighted the clouds they were coming up from the south. If they had gradually shifted to the tail of the "Apex" they were now hurtling over the Ma-

lay Peninsula and over the wide Bay of Bengal at a terrific speed. If the winds were against them they might even be blown backward out into the China Sea.

So, knowing only that he was keeping the plane headed westward, he cut off the third engine and throttled down the other two. Joe nodded approval.

"All we can do is to stay in the air," he shouted over the roar of the storm, "until it lets up and we can see where we are."

Sonny sat very quietly at his useless radio set. He had switched it on once or twice but the roar of the static had quickly told him that it was useless. Still he sat there, needless as it might be. It was at least his own room and he felt helpless and in the way everywhere else. At last Scotty, his ears drooping and his tail between his legs, floundered off the boy's bed and begged to be taken up into his lap. The frightened and lonely youngster lifted the puppy and found much comfort in the companionship of the lovable little dog.

In Sam's room, he and Dick sat in the wicker chairs, each of them listening intently for any

discordant sounds from the two motors. Neither mechanic was comfortable, for they sat on their huge, unwieldy parachute packs and the harnesses which were strapped over their shoulders and hips hampered their movements.

At last Sam went into Andy's cabin, took out the chart and examined the pencilled line which showed their progress. Having located Saignon and observed the seas which encircled the coast of French Indo-China, he returned, took off the parachute and hung it upon a near-by hook.

"The chances are three to one we're over water," he shouted in explanation. "If we're going to bump anywhere around here, I won't need the 'chute. So I may as well be comfortable." Dick's harness soon joined Sam's on the wall.

So passed a terrible night. Hardened as they were to storms, not even the four older fliers had a moment's desire for sleep. As casual as they were in the face of danger, they knew that the "Apex" was flying under almost impossible conditions. It was only due to the marvellous

skill of the two pilots that she was kept in the air at all.

The swirling black clouds gave way to those of leaden gray. Somewhere, many miles above them, the clouds ended, for they found themselves flying through a rainbow. Sometimes another and another rainbow appeared until they could see three of them, each a complete circle instead of the arched bow seen on the ground. At any other time they would have been delighted with the unusual sight. Now they looked at it dully, their sleepless eyes taking in very little of its wonderful beauty.

There had not been an instant's break in the clouds that surrounded them. They had not caught a glimpse of the land or water over which they were flying. Neither had they been able to take a sight on the sun to determine their position by their navigation instruments. The static still ruined the radio reception so Sonny was unable to ask some shore station where they were. All they knew was that ever since they had been caught in the swirl of the typhoon they had kept their bow headed due west.

All during the day Andy and Joe kept anxious eyes on the gasoline gauges—those little dials which told them how long they had to live if the storm continued. They all knew that if their fuel gave out during this screaming wind there was not a chance in the world of landing in the storm-swept sea without a crash. Then the wind and the waves would make short work of mahogany planks, spruce struts and linen fabric.

Sonny, his forehead resting upon the panel of his radio set, had at last dozed into uneasy slumber. When Sam made his regular rounds with hot coffee and sandwiches, he lifted the boy and carried him tenderly to his berth, covered him up and left him to sleep in comfort.

"Poor young 'un," he said softly to himself. "If we have to crash he might as well be asleep!"

Joe and Andy still sat at the wheels like human machines, pulling and hauling at the wheels, kicking at the rudder pedals, and glancing at the compass almost automatically. They were so tired that they had almost ceased to think. Their sleep-drugged minds registered

the tilting and plunging of the plane and their aching limbs corrected the controls just in time to keep the "Apex" from falling off into a nose-dive or a tail spin. The last few hours had been perfect agony. It was only the instinct of self-preservation that prevented them from dropping the controls and leaving the plane to do what she pleased.

The vibrating needles on the several gasoline gauges gradually worked their way toward the bottom of the scale. By the time nightfall had set in, three of the tanks on the wings had emptied their last drop into the carburetors. Enough fuel was now left for a scant two hours of flying. Andy, glancing at Joe during a comparative calm, saw the other's steady blue eyes fixed grimly on the gauges that marked their end when the last of them showed "zero"!

Suddenly there was a lull in the screaming wind, although the rain still beat down on the windows like a solid stream from a fire hose. But, for the moment, the wind was less violent. Perhaps it was but a breathing spell in the storm and it would recommence with redoubled vigor. In that moment Andy determined upon

a desperate chance. He closed the throttles and put the plane in a slow glide.

"Might as well find out whether we're over the sea or land, Joe," he said. "If it's water we'll have to put her down and see if she'll ride out the storm. If it's land, we'll try to pull her out before we hit."

"Fair enough!" answered Joe. "We can't go on like this."

Back in the cabins Sam and Dick rose to their feet as the roar of the engines died to a whisper. With single accord they rushed to the door of Sonny's cabin to be near him in case there was quick rescue work to be done. They braced themselves in a doorway and waited for whatever might come next.

CHAPTER XVII

OVER THE DESERT

Down, down, slid the great "Apex." Andy keeping her in as thin a glide as possible. He tried to see through those thick clouds to see what fate had in store for them. At 200 feet he was tempted to pull out of his glide and fly on until the last drop of gas was gone. If they were over land, they might hit a hill or even crash headlong into the mountainside. Yet what was the use to prolong the agony? So he stayed his hand that would have opened the throttles and held her nose down.

Suddenly, at 75 feet, the "Apex" plunged through the bottoms of the clouds. Water! Great white-capped seas raced beneath the hull of the descending plane. He glanced hastily around the horizon, hoping to see the steady beam of a lighthouse. But for all he could see they might as well have been in the middle of the Arctic Ocean. Then he levelled out for the

landing. Crrump! The first seas hit full under the blunt bow and threw the "Apex" on her beam ends. Sam and Dick were hurled across the cabin floor. Sonny and Scotty were spilled out of their berth and became hopelessly tangled in the corner next to the radio set. Andy and Joe, held firm in their seats by the wide, webbed safety belts, struggled with the kicking wheel to keep the bucking plane head on to meet the next oncoming wave.

The foam-flecked comber crashed against the bow and over the covered cockpit, breaking against the safety glass of the windshield in a soapy smother of spray. Another sickening crash and the "Apex" wallowed sluggishly, helplessly, in the heaving sea.

Joe snapped open his safety belt and stood up, stretching his weary arms.

"Well, here we are!" he said calmly. "Now, where are we?"

"Your guess is as good as mine!" replied Andy as he pulled the switches to silence the idling motors. Sam, Dick and Sonny all piled into the control room, followed by the excited dog. Sam, serious for once in his life, went

straight to the two pilots and gave each of them a hearty slap on the back.

"Boys, there aren't half a dozen pilots in the whole world who could land a plane like this in such a seaway!"

"Will she hold together, or will seas pull her to pieces?" asked Andy.

"She'll ride out the storm," replied Sam confidently. "See how high she's sitting on the water. She'll drift like the dickens in the wind and if we're on a lee shore we may be blown up on the beach and wrecked. But she'll float as long as there's water under her."

"Right!" agreed the quiet Joe.

"Well, if you all have that much faith in her, we may as well take turns standing watch while the others get caught up on their sleep. There isn't the ghost of a chance that we could take off until the seas calm down. We'd tear her to pieces on the first half dozen seas," Andy continued firmly. "I'll take the first watch. The rest of you turn in."

"Nothing doing, Andy!" piped up Sonny. His small face was pale, but undaunted. "Scotty and I have been asleep at the switch

for a long time. We'll stay awake until one of you fellows has his sleep out."

Andy was on the point of refusing such a responsibility to the little fellow, when something in the brave brown eyes behind their great spectacles stopped him.

"Good stuff, Sonny!" he agreed heartily. "While we're napping you'd better overhaul the kite antenna that's in one of the lockers. We'll set it up in the morning and see where we are."

The gray dusk had suddenly turned into night again. But the clouds seemed higher, now, and the wind had certainly died down. The worst of the storm had passed. Andy was sure of this, so he and the other tired men went to their cabins and went to bed, secure in the belief that the plane would float until they waked up.

At daybreak the following morning, all hands set to work getting up the kite antenna. The affair was a huge box kite with a thin steel and copper aerial forming the string which held it to the "Apex." After an hour's work, they had the satisfaction of seeing the glistening yellow

strand stretched at full length, pointing up toward the sunless, overcast sky.

Then Sonny switched on the full power of his set and in a few moments was tapping the sending key excitedly. The anxious men watched him, waiting for his report impatiently. At last his pencil flew over his pad. Then he took off his phones and handed over the scribbled sheet. This had on it their position as shown by radio bearings.

"Latitude 7 degrees, 3 minutes, 10 seconds north. Longitude, 76 degrees, 40 seconds east."

Andy rushed for the chart room and traced the lines showing latitude and longitude. Then he exclaimed incredulously:

"Man, alive, if this is right, we've had the wind in back of us most of the way! We've come across the Malay Peninsula, the Bay of Bengal, across the island of Ceylon and clear past the southern tip of India!"

"Where do we get gas?" came Sam's practical voice.

Andy's dividers measured off the distance.

"Golly, we're out of luck," he said mournfully. "If we have only two hours' worth of

plane, he'll be hanged some day, and I'll read his death notice with perfect calm."

"Don't be too sure he's cracked up," warned Andy. "There are a thousand places along these coasts where he could have landed and no word might trickle through for several days. Whether Brewster's still in the race or not, we have Woods to figure on beating. The way he's been flying doesn't look so rosy for us."

"He hasn't overhauled his motor yet," said the unruffled Sam. "If he doesn't tinker with it a bit before he heads across the Pacific, he's a bigger fool than I think he is."

The seas had calmed down enough so that the "Apex," her weight greatly lessened by the almost empty gas tanks, got off the water with very little difficulty. For the first time since the flight had started Andy set his course to the eastward. Just as the hands of the clock on the instrument board marked 10:30, they saw a tiny black dot on the sky ahead of them.

It was the refuelling plane and contact was established in a short time. With the greatest relief in his heart, Andy saw the gasoline

gauges record the inflow of fuel. At last each of them showed "full." Then the oil, water and provisions were lowered and the oil plane turned back to Ceylon.

Once again the course was set westward and the crew settled down to their normal routine of duty. The morning papers from Colombo were filled with the news of the race. Having been printed just before Sonny had reached them by radio, the chief item of news was the fact that both Andy Lane and Brewster had been caught in the terrific storm and that their planes were missing.

There was a vivid story of the perilous refuelling of the "Apex" over Saignon. The oil plane, after being blown about like a leaf in the wind, had crashed on the outskirts of the town. The plane was completely wrecked but the crew had escaped with a few cuts and bruises.

That it had been a fearful storm was shown by the number of shipping disasters which were also recorded on the front page. As Andy read of the numerous steamers and fishing vessels

that had foundered during that long, awful night, he wondered how the "Apex" had been able to fight her way through the tempest.

"Well, Sam, how are the engines?" Andy asked after a long study of the charts.

"Just as perfect as the day they left the factory," responded the mechanic proudly.

"All right, then, here's where they are called on to do some tall flying. We're going to beat Woods and lose Brewster. Let's hope we don't crash in the attempt!"

"Good!"

"We had planned to refuel at the mouth of the Red Sea. Then we'd follow the Red Sea to the Suez Canal. We'd refuel again at Port Said. There are oil planes waiting at both places. The distance to Port Said that way, is about 3500 miles.

"Instead of that, we're going to take a straight shot for Port Said, which will cut off 400 or 500 miles. But for nearly half the distance we'll be over dry land. What do you say?"

"I can't be bothered with trifles! Fly where

you please. I'll keep the engines turning over." Sam said airily.

"Fine!"

The rest of the crew, who were given the opportunity to vote on the dangerous course suggested, all voted with Sam. So the new compass course was set.

Nature seemed to be trying to repay the weary crew of the flying boat for the hardships she had been forcing them to undergo. As they flew in a northwesterly direction over the dancing waves of the Arabian Sea, the winds became calm and the men again went out into the cockpit, rolled the steel shutter back and enjoyed the warm sunshine.

But as the day wore on into late afternoon and early evening, the atmosphere became breathless with heat. Even the rush of wind caused by the forward motion of the "Apex" was heated as though it had just passed over red-hot coals.

At last Sam had a bright idea. He appeared in the cockpit clad only in his pajamas and he looked so cool and comfortable that the others

hastened to follow his example. They lost all desire for their bunks and when off duty, lounged in the open cockpit.

The flying became monotonous. During the early hours of the night they passed over a steamship brilliantly lighted from stem to stern. The sight, as they flew low over it, relieved the monotony and gave them a momentary feeling of companionship with those passengers on the clean white decks 200 feet below them. But soon the lights dwindled into the darkness of the horizon and they were again alone in the black night.

Not long after midnight, Andy, who was serving his early watch at the wheel, saw a dark patch on the water beneath. This approached rapidly until he suddenly discovered that they were flying over land again.

"Here's Arabia!" he called to Sam, who had just come in with a ham sandwich and a glass of iced coffee.

"Well, what of it?" demanded the other, after a casual look through the windshield. "From where I stand, it looks just about like the water! And I'll bet it's just as hot!"

From the lofty plane all that could be seen was a flat expanse of sand, extending as far as the eye could see in the darkness. In the morning, it looked no more inviting. Mile after mile, hour after hour, they flew across deserts, unbroken by hills or low mountains except at wide intervals.

"Golly, I didn't know there was so much sand in all the world!" declared Sam. "I thought the biggest desert was the Sahara."

"It is," answered Andy.

"Well, then, I don't ever want to walk across it!" was Sam's final remark. "It's too hot, even for me. I think I'd rather be back on the ice barrier near the South Pole."

Several times during the morning and early afternoon they passed over wandering tribes of Arabs. Most of them, instead of being frightened by the appearance of this mighty bird flying over their heads, took pot shots at it with long rifles.

"Nice, friendly fellows!" said Joe. "They'd give us a nasty welcome if we had to make a forced landing, wouldn't they?"

But the faithful motors never faltered and

drove the "Apex" at a steady clip over the burning sands of the endless deserts. Sonny notified the Superior office at Port Said of their hour by hour progress and received their assurance that everything was ready for them when they should arrive.

They caught their first sight of water when they passed over the Gulf of Akaba and then suffered the blinding heat of the desert again. Late in the afternoon they suddenly saw a tiny ribbon of blue cutting through the sand dunes in the heart of the desert. At first they thought it was a river, but as they came nearer they saw several great ocean vessels forging ahead slowly along the narrow channel.

"The Suez Canal!" announced Andy. "We're safe now!"

In another few minutes they had wheeled to the right and were flying low over the wonderful waterway acknowledging the whistled salutes of the steamers by rocking their wings. Soon the desert gave way to blue water on each side of the Canal bank, and at last they caught sight of the breakwater at the end of the Canal. At the junction of Canal and turquoise blue

Mediterranean sprawled the dingy coaling town of Port Said. Andy banked over and headed westward again, leaving the city far astern.

"Not a mile to spare!" he explained to Sam as they watched the oil plane swing over to intercept their course. "We're jumping fast now, old-timer. There's nothing but air between us and the Statue of Liberty. I'm going to forget what's beneath our keel and take all the short cuts the law allows."

"Go to it, big boy!" approved Sam as he dived into the passageway leading to the cockpit.

CHAPTER XVIII

OUT OF GAS

"Sonny," called Andy and as the boy hastened to come to him, the pilot rapped out his instructions.

"We're changing our route again, so work fast. There's a refuelling plane at Marseilles, France. Send a message right away for it to fly down to Gibraltar and meet us there. We're not going to fly over France as we had planned. We're going straight through the Mediterranean and jump from there to New York. I figure I can save five or six hundred miles at least. We need to save every minute of that."

"Wow!" exclaimed Joe who had entered the room just as Andy was explaining the new course. "Well, at least we'll be over the water all the while. I must say I didn't care much about the idea of hopping straight across the Alps in a flying boat!"

"That isn't what's changing the course, Joe.

I'm out to fly hard and fast and save every inch along the route."

Two hours later, as they were winging their way westward over the ever-changing colors of the great Mediterranean, Sonny dashed in, all excitement.

"Andy, here's a report on Brewster. He's over Armenia right now, headed for Constantinople!"

"Well, for the love of Mike, how did we lose track of him?"

"He was delayed in Indo-China by the typhoon. During the gale he overhauled his motors, apparently, and has been making tremendous long jumps ever since."

"He's been flying wide open to have made time like that," said Andy, thoughtfully. "If he can keep it up and not waste any time at his landing places, he'll beat us to New York. The best we can hope for is a nip-and-tuck race, from now on. But at least we're ahead of him at this minute."

Just as dusk set in came news, relayed halfway around the world, that Woods had jumped off from Yokohama at noon the day before

headed for Honolulu and San Francisco. From that moment on, a tenseness filled the cabins of the "Apex." The crew went about, grim and silent, taking every opportunity to go into Andy's chartroom to observe the steady progress of the pencilled line that marked the onrushing path of the flying boat over the Mediterranean. They talked little. They attended to their duties, ate and slept. Gone, for the time being, was the spirit of jollity that had crept into their conversation.

They had 4500 miles left to go and the result was still in grave doubt. They had not only the prize at stake, but their reputations and the reputation, also, of the Apex Company.

When, in the early hours of the morning, Andy flew across the most northerly capes of North Africa to save a few miles, not one of the crew took the trouble to look down on the scenery. They were fed up with scenery. They were interested, now, in seeing but one thing: the broad, whitewashed finish line at Mineola!

Just after breakfast the following morning they sighted the mountainous coast of southern Spain. As they drew closer they saw the

mighty Rock of Gibraltar, which looked small and flattened out when viewed from the air. They were disappointed, for it did not look at all like the scores of pictures they had seen of the powerful British fortress that guards the entrance of the Mediterranean.

Protected by a long, slender breakwater were scores of warships, all flying the white naval ensign of Great Britain. Dozens of steamships, large and small, were riding at anchor in the roadstead. Of chief interest to the crew of the "Apex" was the airplane flying out to meet them, bearing the welcome word, "Superior." It had made the 690 mile flight down from Marseilles in good time and had been waiting for the racing flying boat since midnight. As efficient as all the oil crews had been since the flight had started, they passed down the supplies without loss of time, yet Gibraltar was already shrouded in a blue haze astern when the task was completed and the refuelling plane turned back.

"Next stop, Mineola!" announced Andy as he set the compass on a great circle course over the unfriendly North Atlantic for New York.

Sonny came into the control room with a message that cast cold water over the spirits of the entire crew.

"Brewster left Paris two hours ago. Woods left Honolulu one o'clock yesterday afternoon."

Andy made no comment except that his hand, at last, shoved the throttles wide open and cut in the third great engine. The pointer on the air speed indicator crept forward to 136 miles an hour and remained there, perfectly steady.

All through that day the "Apex" flew to the north and west. The temperature dropped gradually until, toward evening, just after they had plunged into a cold, wet bank of fog, Dick turned on all the electric heaters and passed out the fur-lined coveralls.

Now and then Andy dropped smoke bombs to determine, between banks of fog, how much the wind was setting him off his course. By timing the spaces between patches of smoke, he was able to tell that he was bucking a strong headwind which had cut down the flying speed to 112 miles an hour.

Then the fog shut in one impenetrable mass. The windshield, from within the control room,

looked like ground glass. The clammy chill of the early evening air filled every part of the cabins in spite of the best efforts of the electric heaters. The two pilots, alternating regularly at the wheel, flew blindly by instruments alone, keeping doggedly on their course.

Shrill gusts of wind, laden with snow, sleet, or driving rain, burst upon them more and more often and for an hour or two it would require the full strength of both Andy and Joe to keep the heavy plane on an even keel.

Sam was tireless as the end of the race approached. He was on guard against last minute breakdowns of his motors. Every hour he buckled his safety belt over his furs and ventured out into the weather, touching up his engines as best he could while they were still running. He inspected every inch of the ship at frequent intervals and took his rest in cat naps. Dick prepared the meals, to give Sam more time for rest, marvelling how the plump little man stood up under the strain.

Scotty, at the first touch of cold weather, had burrowed deep under Andy's pillow and had spent most of his time there. Andy seldom

left the control room, even when off duty, catching naps now and then as he sat bolt upright.

At midnight, through the sudden break in the clouds above, Andy was able to get a bearing with his sextant upon the stars.

"We're off the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, Joe! Set the course a bit south. We're on our last lap!"

Radio reports of the other racers kept their nerves on edge. Woods had hopped off at eight o'clock in the evening from San Francisco. A transatlantic steamship reported Brewster's plane flying west at a tremendous speed. From the position given Andy figured that Brewster was not more than an hour and a half behind them. Their routes, although far separated at the start across the ocean, were rapidly meeting as the two racing planes swung down past Cape Grace towards a landfall at Cape Cod.

"You just wouldn't believe that three planes could fly 25,000 miles and be neck and neck at the finish line!" worried Andy as he tried to work out the probable time of arrival of the other two planes. "There may be something wrong with my figuring, but as nearly as I can

determine anything, all three of us ought to arrive at Mineola at just about six o'clock tonight. Golly, if we could only squeeze out ten more miles an hour!"

At that moment Sam came in with a white, tired face. "Andy, we're plumb out of luck!"

"Why?"

"The left wing gas tank has sprung a leak. It's empty and it should be full!"

There was a stunned silence.

"What does that mean? How much have we left?"

"About enough to last until four o'clock."

Andy glanced at the memorandum pad on which he had scribbled the mileages yet to be covered.

"We'll be about a hundred miles east of Cape Cod then," he said at last. "Ask Sonny to come out here.

"Sonny," he said when the boy entered the control room, "ask Mr. Avery to have a tank plane an hour east of Provincetown on Cape Cod at three o'clock this afternoon. Have the plane, when it arrives there, fly in large circles at 1500 feet if it is clear. Above the fog if

there's fog there. If we don't get there promptly have it wait until it has just enough gas in its own tanks to get back to Cape Cod. That's all."

The reply came back immediately.

"'Superior' will be on job. Keep coming, boys, I'm cheering for you. (Signed) Avery."

The last few wisps of fog cleared away just before ten o'clock in the morning. Observations taken with the sextant showed the "Apex" to be exactly on her course. Each of the three engines was still turning over as sweetly as a sewing machine, but Sam did not relax his watchfulness for a minute. He was on the wing, now, every three quarters of an hour, protected from the chill wind by the shutters in front of each motor. In spite of this windbreak, his teeth chattered whenever he returned to the warm cabin.

No more news had come from Brewster's plane. Andy wondered whether it was behind or ahead of them. He hardly allowed himself to believe that the slower "Apex" could hold its lead over the swift French ship all the way to Mineola. News trickled through every now

and then concerning Woods, flying the plane made by Sonny's father. That daring pilot was heading like a bullet across the country. At noon they received a flash that he had landed at St. Louis for a quick refuelling and was off again within fifteen minutes.

Andy tried to push the throttles still farther forward but the "Apex" was already flying wide open. There was no way to increase her speed. The eyes of her crew strayed more and more often to the gasoline gauges as the afternoon wore on. The flying boat was meeting headwinds, now, which cut down her speed a great deal and Andy began to doubt if he could even reach the meeting place with the "Superior." During the night of fog they had climbed to 12,000 feet in an effort to get over the tops of the clouds. Now Andy had altitude to spare, so he nosed down a little as he had on the night of the typhoon, to increase his speed. Every tank but one inside the wing and fuselage had been drained dry of its last drop of gas. Now the gauge of the last tank flickered very close to the zero mark.

The tense crew stood in the passageway be-

hind the pilot's seat waiting for the last gasp of the engines. That would mean landing on the ocean and waiting for a tow to shore. Or perhaps a ship, or a seaplane would find her and transfer enough gasoline to enable her to reach her port. But the race would be lost the moment her keel touched the water. Of that there was no doubt. To add to the grave anxiety of all, Sonny brought a message saying that Woods had passed over Wright Field at Dayton, Ohio, flying at 140 miles an hour.

"There's the 'Superior'!" shouted Joe, and his voice trembled a little with his relief. But in the very instant that their hearts bounded at this glad sight, there was an ominous backfire from the left wing engine. Then its companion on the right wing popped and missed.

Andy reached over and cut both switches, leaving only the center engine to keep them in the air. He cut the throttles and slowed even the center engine down, until a sagging of the plane and a looseness of the controls told him that he had almost lost flying speed.

The plane began to "mush," to sink very gradually as its forward progress continued.

The question uppermost in the minds of all was if she could stay in the air until the "Superior" reached them and dropped the first pipeful of gasoline.

The refuelling plane sighted the "Apex," noticed her sudden slackening of speed and gradual loss of altitude, and raced towards the foundering plane at full speed, gaining altitude as she came.

At last she was directly above them and banked over to come into position. At that moment, with a sudden backfire, the last motor stopped!

CHAPTER XIX

BREWSTER THROWS A WRENCH

Sam dived through the passageway, emerged in the open cockpit and signalled wildly to the crew of the "Superior." Andy nosed down to prevent losing all flying speed and falling into a spin. He put the "Apex" into the thinnest glide it was possible to make and still keep his plane in the air.

The pilot of the "Superior" immediately recognised the trouble and with superb presence of mind pointed his own plane down at a sharp angle, coming down over the "Apex" at full speed until he was in the proper position to drop his hose. Then, as the snake-like hose pipe was lowered, he pulled his plane's bow up until the two ships were gliding together at the same speed, the "Superior" just over the silent "Apex."

As Sam reached for the hose, Andy jockeyed his own plane to help him. It was a case now

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when fractions of seconds counted. The water was coming up fast to meet them! In a very few seconds the hull of the flying boat would hit the first wave. Then she would lose speed and the refuelling plane could do no more. The pilot reached forward and switched on the engines, so that the propellers, which were idly spinning in the wind, would crank the motors and start them the moment the first drop of gas reached the empty carburetors.

Sam had the hose nozzle now, and was frantically jamming it into the filler pipes. With despair in his heart, Andy saw that the water was right under them, now, and he levelled off for a landing.

The first wave reached for the ski-shod hull when suddenly, with a mighty roar, the center motor cut in. In the next second the two wing motors joined their companions. The lifting wave hit the keel of the "Apex" a mighty blow, but Andy pulled hard back on the wheel and jerked the plane off the water before the next roller was able to check her for good. Its white-topped crest licked at the wet planks, but did not even jar the skimming hull. When the

third sea rolled beneath them, the "Apex" was safely in the air.

The "Superior" followed every move of the plane beneath her, the pilot watching carefully to see that he was allowing the "Apex" sufficient room to climb out of danger. But never an instant did the efficient Sam take the nozzle that was feeding his plane away from the filler pipe. In ten minutes every tank had been filled except that which was leaking. The "Superior" sheered away and turned off towards the nearest land.

"Well," said Andy, wiping the perspiration from his wet forehead, "you'll never have a closer call than that, if you fly for a million years!"

"No," retorted Joe. "And I don't want to! I'm getting too old for excitement like that, anyway. Man alive, I certainly kissed my share of the first prize goodbye when that first wave slapped up against the hull!"

"So did I!" agreed Andy, watching the faithful "Superior" fade out of sight on the starboard quarter. "You take the wheel now, Joe. I'll get caught up on my chart work."

As Andy was drawing the pencilled line on the map that showed their progress during the past four hours, he heard a shout from Sam.

"Come quick!" he yelled. "There's a plane right behind us!" Andy rushed to the living cabin and looked out of the port hole. Sure enough, a great tri-motored plane was two or three miles astern of them and fast overtaking them. As he raced to the control room where he could get a clearer view, Andy realised it might very well be Brewster. All the transatlantic paths came together here, just at the tip of Cape Cod, and he might have known Brewster would fly along this course.

Standing beside Joe and looking backward at the approaching plane, Andy could make out very clearly that the airplane was not of American build. The lines were different. When he had studied it a moment he knew it to be Brewster with his French plane.

Well, that was that! How discouraging to be beaten in the last two hundred miles of a twenty-five thousand mile race! Especially by such a scoundrel as Brewster. He wouldn't have minded so much being beaten by Woods!

Joe's face was set in hard, grim lines as he glanced through the rear-view mirror and saw their enemy coming up astern. Through her open cabin windows they could see the grinning, triumphant faces of Brewster and his companions. Yes, the two men peering out behind him were the same pair of thieves who had tried to steal the "Apex" on the Polar ice. And to think, mused Andy, with bitterness in his heart, that these three scoundrels should win the race!

But Brewster could not let well enough alone. His hatred for Andy and the rest of the crew of the "Apex" drove him to gloat over his coming triumph. He throttled down his motors and flew close beside the flying boat, matching his speed to hers. Then he gradually crowded over toward his rival until the two ships flew wing to wing, with a span of less than ten feet between their tips.

"If his idea is to shove me over, he has the wrong bird by the tail!" said Joe through clenched teeth as he held his plane exactly on her course.

The taunting, grinning face at the opposite window suddenly showed stark, killing hate.

Brewster shoved his companions out of his way and shook his fist at those on the "Apex" who were watching him so calmly. At last his temper surged over him like a flood of muddy water. He withdrew his clenched fist into the cabin. When it reappeared, it held a heavy Stillson wrench. This he threw straight at the bow of the ship which was holding her course beside him.

Andy, seeing the missile curving toward them in a gentle arc, turning end over end as it came, suddenly realized that it would hit the hull. Even worse, it would hit the very window at which Joe sat calmly watching the horizon before him. The boy leaped to pull the pilot out of harm's way, but even as he grabbed his friend there was a splintering crash, a dull thwack and Joe slumped over the wheel.

In the next instant, the "Apex," answering the sagging, unconscious pressure at the helm, tilted far over on her left wing. Her bow dropped and in an instant she was well on her way into a tail spin. As she pivoted around on the first turn, there came a jar that ran through the entire fabric of the ship.

Dropping the unconscious Joe, Andy squirmed into the other seat and kicked, with all the power of his leg muscles, at the fluttering rudder pedals, at the same time throwing his full weight against the spinning wheel.

Just as she began to right herself, he had a momentary glimpse of another wing, flashing by the swinging bow of his ship. That wing was shattered at its tip, long streamers of torn fabric standing straight back in the wind.

At last, after two more full turns, Andy had the heavy ship again under control and straightened her out, not 200 feet above the water. Then he had time to look about. Brewster's plane, too, was just straightening out of her dive, but her pilot was having a desperate time with her. She flew like a crippled duck, constantly slipping off on her injured wing and threatening to spin again at any moment. After each slip, the plane had lost altitude, until at last she hit the water with a mighty splash. The smooth linen covering of her graceful hull crumpled up into a torn, ragged mass of wrinkled rags. Brewster was out of the race!

CHAPTER XX

THE FINISH LINE

As Andy turned back in a wide circle over the wreck, preparing to cut his switch and glide to the rescue, he saw Brewster and his two companions crawl out of a crack in the cabin roof and stand upon the wreckage, shaking their fists upwards at the flying boat.

That settled it! Andy knew that if the air tanks had not collapsed, the wrecked ship would float on the calm surface for many hours, so he held the "Apex's" bow up and circled again over the wreck. He had little desire to rescue that precious crew unless it became necessary to save their useless lives. Sam, pale as a ghost, rushed into the control room. He grasped Joe's limp figure and stretched him out on the cockpit floor. Then he dashed back for a cupful of water and tossed it into the pilot's face. Joe sat up, looking about wildly and touching an ugly cut on his temple.

"Sonny!" Andy shouted. As the boy came in on the run, he directed, "Send an S. O. S., saying that Brewster has crashed fifty miles east of Provincetown. When you get an answer, tell 'em to hurry. We'll stick around until someone comes."

The boy returned in a few minutes with word that he had picked up a Coast Guard picket boat, fifteen miles away, which would arrive in thirty or forty minutes.

So around and around the wreck flew the giant "Apex," paying no attention to the angry signals of the men below, but ready to pick them up if the wreckage should sink under them. Joe staggered to his feet and went into his own cabin.

"You'd think the crash was our fault, the way those birds make faces at us!" grumbled Sam, as he peered out the cabin window. "If Brewster had been content to fly straight on, he'd have had the $75,000 in his pocket. But no, he wanted to give us the razz and heave that wrench at us. Suffering rattlesnakes, Joe, what are you doing!"

He leaped to the door leading outside the

hull, just in time to prevent Joe from opening it. With his parachute pack buckled in place, Brewster's Stillson wrench in his hand, the pilot was preparing to leap overboard as the "Apex" flew over the wreckage.

"Get out of my way, Sam!" he snapped, his voice trembling with rage. "I'm going to return that wrench to Brewster if it costs me my share of the prize money!"

He made an effort to brush Sam's hands away, but Dick went into action and the two mechanics speedily subdued the raging pilot, took his parachute off and locked him in his room until he cooled off.

"Well, sir, I'll eat those three engines, spark plugs and all, if I ever ship again with a crazy coot like that!" sputtered Sam. "At that, though, I'd sort of liked to have seen him doing the shot-put with those three boloneys down there! I've always wanted to take a pop at Brewster's beak myself!"

"Look, Andy!" exclaimed Dick. "Here comes the patrol boat."

"Good!" said Andy, with a final glance of relief at the still floating plane. "Here's where

we get back into the race! You can let Joe out now.

As the still angry, but somewhat sheepish, Joe sat down beside him, Andy swung the great ship back on her course, straight for Mineola. In another hour the long, sandy tip of Cape Cod came into sight, marked by the lighthouse and the fishing village of Provincetown. Like a shot out of a gun they cut across the narrow strip of sand, then over the blue waters of Cape Cod Bay. Again the heel of Cape Cod flashed under them and in another moment they were hurtling across Nantucket Sound, with Long Island just over the horizon before them.

Just as they sighted its eastern tip in the distance, Sonny reported that Woods had been seen flying high over Reading, Pennsylvania. A hasty glance at the chart in front of the wheel showed Andy that the Collins plane and the "Apex" were still flying neck and neck, each about the same distance away from Mineola.

"Lighten ship, Sam!" he snapped. "Throw over everything you can lay your hands on!

Dump all the gas and oil we don't need to get us to the finish line."

The crew went through the cabins like a hurricane. Wicker chairs, electric heaters, food, spare parts and supplies all followed each other out of the windows as the dump valves spilled surplus gasoline, oil and the entire contents of the water tanks. Everything in the lockers went overboard in a frenzied effort to save every ounce of weight and thus increase the speed. At last the lockers yawned empty and the cabin of the ship, once so neat and homelike, looked like the morning after moving day. But the air speed indicator had crept up to 155 miles an hour and the crew had to rest content.

As they finished their housecleaning, they saw the rolling hills of Long Island speeding beneath their hull. Soon the hills and valleys smoothed themselves out into the flat meadows of the central part of the Island. The entire crew now abandoned their useless duties and stood silently behind Andy, watching the horizon ahead for the first sight of Mineola. Their

anxious eyes also searched the skies for Woods' plane, hoping against hope that they would not see it sliding down to the finish line ahead of them.

At last, across the dusty fields, they saw the latticed tower of the flying field, with its familiar wind cone idling in the summer breeze. Around every side of the vast rectangle were parked thousands of cars. Tens of thousands of spectators were kept behind the ropes by a cordon of soldiers who had been hurriedly called to reinforce the police.

From the haze beyond the field appeared a tiny black dot which grew larger and larger with each passing second.

"Look, Andy! There's a plane, coming like the wind! It's a Collins! It must be Woods!" Sam was beside himself with excitement.

Andy nosed the "Apex" down, putting her into a steep glide, but leaving all three throttles wide open. The blunt bow was headed sharply down towards that broad, whitewashed line which was already visible, a mile away and two thousand feet below. The wind screamed through every wire and strut, the steady, even

drone of the motors became a roaring, thundering vibration that threatened to tear them from their foundations. The air speed indicator showed 165 miles an hour!

The other fast approaching plane also dipped its nose and shot like an arrow for the white-washed line from the opposite side of the field.

Straight ahead of the meteor-like flying boat was a line of telephone wires that marked the outside boundaries of the field. Andy almost touched them with his keel as he roared toward the finish line. At last he levelled out, the ski-shod hull almost scraping the tips of the close-clipped grass. Closer, closer came the white-washed line. A little man in puttees ran out and, as the mahogany hull swept by him, waved a checkered flag.

And to every nook and corner of the civilised world went the news by telegraph, radio and submarine cable, that Andy Lane and his daring crew had scored again!

CHAPTER XXI

SITTING ON TOP OF THE WORLD!

Joe shook the controls and the exhausted Andy gratefully turned the ship over to him. The strain of navigating the "Apex" over 25,000 miles of heat and cold, typhoons and sleet storms, had taxed his strength more than he had realised.

As the winning ship zoomed away from the field in a steep, climbing turn, Andy gazed dully out of the window and saw the little man with the checkered flag wave Woods into second place. He saw a tiny monoplane rise from the ground as the happy thousands of spectators milled jubilantly across the grass. It was an Apex plane, he noted, but he was too tired to be interested.

Joe cut his engines over the shore of Long Island Sound and swung down in a flat spiral, shooting for the water just beyond the run-

way from which the "Apex" had set out on her world-girdling race. The little land ship also slid down, coming to rest in the temporary landing field a hundred yards from the shore's edge.

Under a single motor the mighty flying boat nosed up to the beach, where a little group of joyful mechanics waited to pull her up on her cradle. The two passengers from the little monoplane joined them, watching the landing of the crew impatiently.

Andy, as was fitting and proper for the captain of the ship, went ashore last. He was immediately grabbed in a hearty bear hug by Mr. Avery, who danced him around with great glee. Then the taller man who had been greeting Sonny, turned to the older boy. It was Sonny's father.

"Andy," exclaimed Mr. Collins joyfully, "this is the happiest day of my life!"

"Of course you're happy to have Sonny come back after doing such a wonderful job," smiled Andy. "Too bad your plane couldn't have won first prize, too."

"It did!" laughed Mr. Collins, winking at Mr. Avery. "My ships came in both first and second, didn't they, Avery?"

"I'll tell the world!" was the undignified but happy response.

Before Andy had recovered from his confusion, three great limousines rolled up and the fliers were hustled into them to be driven to their homes.

The two former rival manufacturers bustled Andy, Sonny and Scotty into the first car, then climbed in themselves. As they were whisked smoothly toward home, Mr. Avery said:

"I think we owe you an explanation, boys. Mr. Collins and I have joined forces while you have been away. Instead of being rivals, we are now partners!"

Andy looked at Sonny, too overcome to speak! One of his fondest dreams had come true. These two wonderful friends of his, now joined in a gigantic partnership, with all quarrelling and bitterness laid aside!

"One more thing, Andy. You've been elected Vice President of the new company, in charge of experimental flying, at a salary of $25,000 a

year. You are now on an indefinite leave of absence to finish your college work. You have the privilege of flying again, whenever and wherever you please. Is that offer attractive enough to hold you in spite of all the propositions you'll get to go into the movies, on the stage or what not?"

Andy was breathless with joy. He threw one strong arm around his little friend and held Scotty, the flying pup, closer in his lap. Then he managed to ask:

"May Sonny be a regular member of my crew whenever we take big hops?"

"If he wants to," responded his father, promptly.

"Well, Ivory-head," smiled Andy to Sonny, "I'll say we're sitting right on top of the world, what?"

THE END

The Andy Lane story following this is entitled

THE RUNAWAY AIRSHIP

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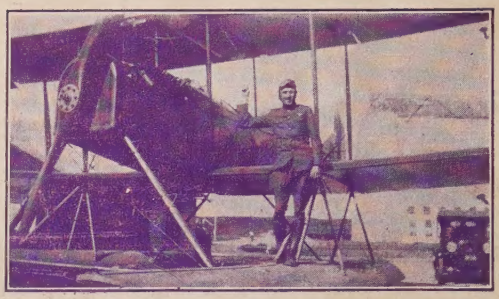

This snapshot was taken while Mr. Adams was an Ensign in the U. S. Naval Aviation Service during the World War, and shows the author standing on the pontoon of a huge bombing plane.

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